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"SOME LIFE-LONG FRIENDSHIPS HAVE BEEN ORIENTED IN LESS THAN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS," SAID HUGH.

OLD ROSSITER'S DAUGHTER.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Miss Gipsy!"

The girl turns slowly from her inspection of the dusty white road, and looks down at the honest face and frank grey eyes of the speaker.

"How did you get up there?"

"By the steps. Thomas has taken them away, so I am a prisoner until he chooses to return."

The young fellow glances towards the "odd-job man," training nectarines at a little distance.

"I can lift you down," he said smiling, but the girl shakes her head.

"I like being here market-days; I see all my old friends and acquaintances, and get a pleasant greeting from each," she answers, veering round so rapidly, that but for the young man's quick, strong hands she must have fallen from her seat on the wall. It is exactly six feet high, and his brow is level with its top; now he says,

"May I join you?"

"You may come if you care to!" dimples showing in her pretty cheeks, "but climbing is a bad for clothes." He does not seem to mind this, and in two seconds is sitting facing her, his grey eyes a little mischievous, and the suspicion of a smile showing under his moustache.

"Why do you come on market-days?"

"I don't always, only when the weather is good. Of course I come to see the people; this place is so fearfully dull that one is glad of any break in the monotony, however small."

"I suppose," he says, "your admirers all pass along this road to the town?"

"Of course they do. There is Dick Harney who is as stupid as he is handsome; then there

is Mr. Tuck, with a face besides which a strawberry is pale, and a moustache like a stubble-field; and Harry March, who is neither handsome nor plain, tall nor short, good nor bad." She laughs as she draws her catalogue to a close, and her companion asks with mock surprise,—

"Is that the full complement of lovers and admirers?"

"I can't truthfully say it is; but if I speak of others you will dub me a conceited young woman."

"Indeed, no, and I am interested in these unhappy mortals, for of course you treat them with disdain."

Gipsy lifts her large, dark brown eyes to his; the pretty crimson shows through her brown skin, on either rounded cheek; and the scarlet lips, parting in a smile, reveal two rows of glistening teeth.

"How else do you suppose a Rossiter would behave to such admirers?"

"I can imagine no other way"—the girl's eyes leave his face and travel to the road where a

horseman is going at a slow pace and regarding her adoringly.

"That is Mr. Tuck," she says, in a whisper, and bows to the strawberry-faced man in a half coquetish way.

"I'm afraid you're a very sad flirt," her companion says amusedly, and she answers dreamily,—

"I am what circumstances have made me. Society here is so limited that a man is a god-send, especially if he is young, good-looking, and polished."

"Thank you!" mischievously accepting the compliment as paid to himself.

Gipsy's eyes open wide.

"For impudence and vanity commend me to Mr. Hugh Stamer."

"That is cruel, and I could not have believed you guilty of malice but for this proof. Do you know, young lady, it is time to start for the Hall!"

"Yes, but I'm not going; I hate tennis. I can't see the use of rushing about in such a sun as this, merely to knock balls to and fro. If it had been croquet I should have been pleased to join the party. There are such facilities for flirting and enjoying oneself generally whilst playing the latter."

"But," ignoring the last half of her speech, "the boys are going!"

"That makes no difference to my decision. I am far too sane to put off my cool holiday for a much-befouled cashmere, and I am indolent to-day. Of course you will go!"

"No; I have been longing for a reasonable excuse to absent myself. I shall stay here to amuse you."

She makes a mocking little bow.

"How exceedingly kind you are," Then her name is called loudly in three distinct voices, and she sees her brothers, each with his hat, looking dismayed at her appearance.

"Why, Gipsy, you aren't dressed!" Frank says vexedly.

"I'm not going; now don't exclaim and protest, but carry my excuses to Mrs. Hanlan; say I am ill, dying, anything you like, so that my conduct doesn't appear very flagrant."

The governor will be vexed when he hears you have called off," remarks Ted, but Gipsy makes a disdainful grimace. "The governor"—mockingly—"thinks I can do nothing wrong," and when her brothers at last pass out of the garden, she turns to Hugh with a sigh of relief.

"How comfortable I feel, now I have done my duty," laughing softly.

"I cannot say that I am comfortable; it's very hot up here, and I'm positively baking."

"Shall we get down? It is rather sunny here. You can lower yourself, then fetch the step for me," coolly.

And Hugh slips down, then says,—

"Thomas is at the remote end of the garden. I shall lift you from the wall."

And not being oppressed by any mock, nineteenth-century modesty, Gipsy allows this, and in another moment is standing beside him on the gravel path.

"How the sun pours down upon one's head. Don't evince any surprise if I have a stroke!"

"Prevention is better than cure. Put a cabbage-leaf in the crown of your hat. Is that more comfortable?" she asks, as he obeys her.

"Infinitely. I should not have thought of such a thing myself! Two heads are better than one."

"Sometimes," Gipsy remarks, with a sage nod; "but I could name many exceptions."

"I shall be delighted to hear them. Pray begin."

"It is too hot. I will tell you some other time."

"That's a mean way of getting out of a difficulty. I don't believe you can prove your assertion."

Gipsy laughs.

"I am not to be scoffed into giving my reasons. Now tell me please, Mr. Stamer, have you remained at home from indolent or philanthropic notions? To please yourself or to amuse me?"

"I won't tell a lie," comically. "I prefer

staying with you, and don't very much care for tennis."

"Why not substitute 'because' for 'and'?" it would take from the courtesy and add to the truth of your speech," the girl says, with an arch glance.

"That is very nasty, and I don't know what punishment you deserve," with a look of admiration at the pretty, piquant face. "If I revelled in tennis I should still prefer staying here with you; but the game really interests me very little."

"I am glad it is so," Gipsy says, emphatically. "I fancy a man must be a milkop to spend all his leisure moments in the practice of it. If I belonged to the male sex I should run, jump, skate, row, cricket—do anything, in fact, that calls for strength and skill."

"You say nothing of football. Don't you approve that?"

"Oh, yes, especially when played according to Rugby rules; it is so delightfully dangerous. But, of course, a few broken legs and collar-bones add to the fun of the thing."

"You little barbarian," Hugh says, with mock disgust, and Gipsy interrupts, quickly,—

"Pardon, it is the game that is barbarous, not I. Seriously speaking I object to it, although," beginning to laugh—"it has one merit, it occasionally rids the world of an obnoxious, muscular Christian."

They have reached the confines of the garden, and Hugh asks—

"What do you intend doing now?"

"Nothing," coolly; "but you may row me up and down the stream under the trees."

"That is a very nice arrangement for you," laughing outright; "but I don't see my way to a refusal. Will you stay here while I go to the house for books and a cushion?" and he hurries off to return in a few moments, flushed with the haste he has made.

"I think," says Gipsy, as she swings open the gate, and enters the meadow, which is bordered by a broad and shallow stream. "I think we had best go no further than Mab's Hollow. I should not wish any one to see us, and carry Mrs. Hanlan the real reason for our absence."

On the stream is a roomy boat, and close by it a small canoe belonging to Gipsy.

Hugh helps her into the former, gives her a book, then taking the sculls makes for the middle of the stream.

Mab's Hollow is the extreme boundary of Mr. Rosseter's ground, and, reaching it, Hugh announces his intention of tying up the boat.

"We can spend a jolly hour or two under the trees. The only thing we need to insure our perfect content is an unlimited supply of iced lemonade."

"I think you are extremely indolent," the girl remarks, as she resettles her cushion. "I expected you would keep the boat going until I cried stop."

"Oh! Miss Rosseter, you're worse than a slave-driver," reproachfully. "The late trifling exertion has rendered me incapable of action of any kind for at least two hours. I am positively melting away. Do you treat your brothers in this unchristian fashion?"

"If it is unchristian—yes. Brothers are born to serve their sisters, but few of them understand their duties."

She opens her book and begins to read, and Hugh, lying in the bow, looks into the pretty face under its sunburnt hat, and wonders a little what his father would say could he know the hopes he nurses concerning the girl.

Presently she yawns and closes the volume.

"Is your book interesting, Mr. Stamer? because mine is the reverse. The heroine is a sentimental, die-away sort of girl, with yellow hair and blue eyes. Of course she is named Lily—they always are," disgustedly. She leans forward and peeps over his book. "Oh! you have not been reading, it is the wrong side up; have you been dosing?"

"No," unhesitatingly. "I've been looking at you and thinking, how very pretty you are."

Gipsy blushes furiously.

"You are remarkably candid," with a little nervous laugh.

"I was thinking, too," Hugh says, "it would be a deal nicer if you talked to me instead of reading. I am an excellent listener. Tell me about yourself, Miss Gipsy."

She leans back, clasping her hands behind her head.

"I've nothing to tell that you are not already acquainted with, and I abjure vain repetition on principle."

"But what have you done with the eighteen years of your life, young lady?"

"Nothing—simply nothing. When pleasures came I took them, when they did not it was useless to complain. After all, my life has been a bright one," more thoughtfully than usual. "My father idolises me, my brothers all agree in spoiling me. In the summer I walk and drive, or paddle up and down the stream in my canoes (that was a present from Alf). In the winter there is skating, provided we get frost, which doesn't happen more than once in five years. For the rest I play a little, sing a little, neither paint nor draw, and know nothing of 'fancy work' and its intricacies. I'm a fearfully ignorant young woman."

"Have you never been to school?"

"No," opening her eyes wide. "How do you suppose father would exist without me? He has taught me all I know, and thanks to him I am a good French scholar. Oh! we have never parted, and I hope we never shall be."

"Some man will carry you off one day, and you'll go willingly."

Gipsy shakes her head, but not quite so emphatically as she would have done three weeks ago.

"You don't know what we are to each other," she says, very gently, and stretches out one pretty brown hand for a forget-me-not, which, when she has gathered, Hugh begs from her.

They are silent for a time, and Gipsy closes her eyes and listens in a dreamy way to the cooing of the wood-pigeons and the occasional caw of a crow. In the sunlight the hushlings are glancing from flower to flower, and the great water-lilies dart to and fro. Once a frog appears upon the surface of the water and utters a feeble croak, then disappears and returns to his own cool home.

Hugh glances away from the water into his companion's face. It has grown gentler and graver, and when she speaks her voice is dreamy.

"Once we were very rich. I don't remember being so, but the boys do. But father had a friend who deceived him and robbed him. I don't quite know how that was either, and I dare not ask because it is so painful to him to speak of it. But our lands stretched away miles and miles." She opens her brown eyes then, and with a wave of her hand indicates the pleasant country around them. "All that you see belongs to Squire Hanlan (save this little nook of ours), but it is as nothing to the land my father once held. I ought to be an heiress, but possibly if I were I should not be so happy."

"That is a very philosophical way of regarding trouble; I hope it will never leave you. But did Mr. Rosseter save nothing but this little spot from the wreck of his fortunes?"

"When he had disposed of house and lands and paid all that he owed he had just sufficient to purchase this place. His income is derived from my mother's fortune, and amounts in all to four hundred pounds per annum. He grieves terribly, because he says it is so little to divide between four of us. Then, too, he could not give the boys a good start in life. There is Frank a merchant's clerk, Alf an accountant, and poor Ted a midshipman, and father cannot forget the ancient glory of the Rosseters. Neither can we. Why, we are older than most of the so-called 'nobility,' with a pretty flash of pride. 'Only here people do not know us for what we were, and,'—laughing—"they call me 'Old Rosseter's madcap daughter.'"

"Poor little Gipsy!" and she hardly notices his familiarity.

The flickering golden lights play through the trees upon her bonny face and curly hair, the

butterflies chase each other madly, and listen, how the pigeons coo! What a heavenly day it is! How it steepens one's senses in a delicious languor that one wishes might last for ever!

"Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb,
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us and become
Fortions and parcels of the dreadful past."

Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
For ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest and ripen towards the grave
In silence: ripen, fall, and cease.
Give us long rest or death, dark death or dreamful ease."

The girl's low musical voice, lazy and languid too, seems hardly to break the golden silence.

Those are very beautiful words, Miss Gipsy, but they clothe a horrible idea. Who would spend one's whole life in such shameful indolence and selfish indulgence? All one's feelings would be blunted—all one's perceptions dulled. No; give me work or death."

Gipsy laughs at his earnestness.

"Mr. Stamer, don't spoil this afternoon by speaking of work or death. I am just now in the very mood for 'dreamful ease.'"

Then now at least you shall have it. Will you be silent whilst I talk to amuse you, or shall I hold my peace!

"Certainly not the latter. As I have given you a brief sketch of my life, it would be but a just reward if you tell me what you have done in all your twenty-five years."

"Not very much, I'm afraid. You see being born a rich man there was never any necessity for exertion on my part, and my father would never allow me to adopt any profession. So I have dabbled a little in the muse, and given much of my time to small compositions in the way of comedies and dramas. I confess frankly none of them have yet appeared on the boards, but I do not despair. The more I see of life, the less crude my productions will be, and I am too true an Englishman to give in."

"I thought you were an American, although you haven't the national twang. Frank told me you came from New York."

"So I did, recently; but I was born in England, and educated here. Returning home, I spent two years with my father, and then longing for a sight of my native land broke away from everything to gratify my wish. I brought letters of introduction to Frank's governors, and there I had the good fortune to meet him. Our acquaintance ripened into friendship, and he asked me down here."

"I have never heard you speak of your father before," Gipsy says, thoughtfully. Will you tell me if he is like you?"

The young man's brow darkens a moment, but in an instant he laughs.

"No, not in the least. He is an extremely lean and lank individual; sallow, with keen, pale blue eyes, a prominent nose, and thin lips."

"I should not like him; his description doesn't sound nice. Why did he voluntarily leave England?"

"Because my mother died here, and after that he hated the country and swore never to visit it again—he loved her."

Something in his tone caused the girl to look up swiftly, and say,—

"And he does not you?"

"No, nor any living creature; nor anything but his money-bags."

The girl looks scornful, but merely asks,—

"And is there no one else to care for you?"

"There is my cousin, Annabel Frost, who is half American; her mother was my father's sister. She is an orphan now, and my father's ward."

"Is she beautiful?"

"I don't know; she was only sixteen when I came away, and, like most school girls shy and awkward—all legs and arms. By the way, Miss Gipsy, when is Mr. Rositer expected home?"

"In three days at the latest; he will be glad to welcome you, and I am sure you will be such good friends that I shall see very little of you."

"That is scarcely likely, Gipsy. I shall not desert my colour."

The long, sunny hours fleet by, and under the trees the shadows deepen. Through the branches a green light falls upon the still, clear waters, and the sun goes slowly sloping to the west, where a couch of crimson amid purple clouds awaits him.

The young people have been silent a long time; Gipsy stirs now among her cushions.

"It is time we went home; the boys will be returning soon."

Hugh looks round ruefully.

"I believe the lotos-eaters mood has fallen upon me; I am very unwilling to go. What a shadowy arcadia it is!" but he bends to the sculls and they shoot swiftly out into the centre of the stream.

"I shall never forget these pleasant hours," the young man says, glancing into the young girl's lovely dark eyes.

"Nor I," she answers, then she blushes hotly; and he takes advantage of her confusion.

"When I am gone you will fall back upon your other cavaliers. Shall you be sorry to say good-bye? and will Messieurs Tuck and March supply my loss?"

"I shall be sorry to say good-bye," demurely; "but, fortunately, I have many friends and acquaintances, so you will not leave me desolate."

"And amongst all those friends and acquaintances Hugh Stamer will be utterly forgotten in the course of a few months."

"Nothing is more probable," flashing a glance at him from under her hat. "But we will dry quits as to that, for I question if my name will survive in your memory six months."

"I shall remember you always," he says, emphatically.

And once more Gipsy flushes under his intent look. He gives her his hand, and assists her to the bank, and they walk on side by side in a sudden, embarrassed silence. The girl is first to break it.

"Mr. Stamer, how long shall you remain with us?"

"Are you so very anxious to get rid of me, Miss Gipsy?"

"Ah!" laughing, "you have contracted the abominable Yankee habit of giving question for question. Really, I ought not to gratify such curiosity, only I am anxious to vindicate the hospitality of the Rositers. You seemed to insinuate that we are weary of you."

"Then you are not!" his bright, grey eyes very eager.

"The boys are certainly glad to have you here," she says, evasively.

"And you?" he questions, persistently.

"Oh! I take things as they come, and if unpleasant, endure them with Spartan fortitude and Job-like patience."

"You class me with the unpleasant things," amusedly, and he bends down the better to see her face.

"I did not say so; but, Mr. Stamer, you have not yet answered my question as to the duration of your stay."

"How long will you keep me—three weeks?"

"If you can endure the dulness of Stonyfield so long—yes."

"Dull! why I never had so good a time in my life as I am having here, nor such pleasant companions."

"In the names of Stonyfield and the Rositers I thank you."

"What a tease you are, Gipsy. I was really speaking sober truth, and you accept it as an empty compliment, and inwardly revel in my confusion."

"Not I; I am too charitable to revel in the confusion of any creature," smiling saucily. "I am overflowing with the 'milk of human kindness.' There never was a girl more devoid of malice than I."

She swings open the gate dividing the kitchen garden from the meadow, and passes in before him. He follows slowly up the well-kept paths, his eyes resting in admiration on the dainty figure in its cool, holland dress with the fluttering crimson ribbons, and once, when Gipsy turns to speak, there is such a look upon his face that she can but guess his secret.

The colour flushes her cheeks and brow, but she contrives to say, with perfect sang froid,—

"Mr. Stamer, I'm wondering what your father and cousin would say could they know how poor are the friends you have chosen."

"Rest assured, nothing they could say would alter my regard for you and yours; and birth is better than fortune. Why, Annabel's father started life as a huckster, and of my own pedigree I know nothing. If ever I had a grandfather I have heard nothing of the old gentleman. My revered parent is very reserved as to his or my mother's antecedents, so probably I am no better born than Annabel."

"But surely," Gipsy says, a trifle disappointedly, "her mother could have told you all you wished to know!"

"She died before we went to America, and if my uncle was aware of our past I was too young to question him or care about it, and when I grew curious I had no longer the chance to do so, for he died suddenly."

"Oh!"

She moves forward again, and together they enter the sweet, old-fashioned garden, where great cabbage-roses, stocks, white plinks and mignonette, with a score of other sweet-scented flowers fill the very air with odours so rich, so heavy one almost feels them.

"I should be sorry to leave the dear old place," Gipsy says, meditatively; "to my mind there never was so sweet a garden as this of ours."

"I quite agree with you," heartily; "and it is in such perfect keeping with the house."

"Yes," looking with loving, lingering eyes on the low, grey stone building surrounded by a verandah, over which wisteria, passion-flowers, clematis, and jasmine climb in wild luxuriance.

"It is a lovely picture. Now, to be prosaic, come into dinner. I can hear the boys' voices; doubtless they are ravenous, and consequently impatient."

CHAPTER II.

An intensely hot day in early August; two young people in the meadow just above Mab's Hollow; a swing is suspended between two trees, and upon the swing sits Gipsy gently swaying to and fro; at her feet lies Hugh Stamer, a vexed look upon his handsome face.

Gipsy regards him reflectively, but he seems quite unconscious of her scrutiny, only looks up into the clear blue vault above, seen dimly through the interlacing branches, and plucks the grass growing around with hasty, impatient fingers.

"Why so wan and pale?" queries the girl, with a low laugh, which echoes amongst the trees like music.

Hugh starts.

"I have had unpleasant news, Miss Gipsy."

She looks concerned.

"May I share them?"

"There is no help for it," ruefully. "You know I received a letter from home this morning! It was from my father, and its purport to recall me to America."

Is it the flickering shadow of the leaves that seems to pale her face, or has the blood really flown from the soft, rounded cheeks? Hugh lifts himself on his elbow, and looks at her intently.

There is a momentary silence, then Gipsy says,—

"How soon are you going?"

"In a fortnight, so you must make the most of me."

Still she slowly sways to and fro, but she does it mechanically now, and the joyous ring has left her fresh, young voice when she says,—

"I wonder if you will ever think of us. Of course, at first you will; but after the lapse of a few months shall we be like dream-people to you—vague and shadowy?"

"You, at least, will not. I shall remember you all my life."

He speaks so earnestly and his eyes are so full of the fire of love that her own droop before them. She tries to laugh, but fails, so says,—

"You will scarcely form any idea of papa's

character and goodness before you go, for he returns only two days earlier than the date of your departure, and I so wanted you to be good friends."

"Some life-long friendships have been cemented in less than forty-eight hours, and it may be so in our case."

"I hope so," thoughtfully; but she does not look at him, her eyes are cast down, and the pretty lips are tremulous.

"Gipsy," he says, reproachfully, "you have not yet said you are sorry I must go, and courtesy alone should make you do that."

"I thought we had foresworn courtesy," she answers, with an attempt at sauciness, which proves a great failure.

Hugh Stamer rises, and lays his hands upon the ropes to stay the slight motion.

"But you are sorry!" he says, confidently, and now Gipsy makes no reply, only does her best to screen her face from his observation.

She is so pretty, so dainty; and he is so young and eager. His heart throbs madly against his side; he stoops and suddenly kisses the slim throat, which flushes under his caress.

No words escapes Gipsy's lips. She sits motionless, with drooped head, and the little hands lying upon her lap tremble like leaves in a summer wind.

"Gipsy," Hugh says, in an agitated whisper, "are you angry?"

One little hand flutters up to his, but she cannot speak. Still her answer must be highly satisfactory, for the young man repeats his offence, only this time upon the pretty mouth. Then he lifts her from her seat, and she stands, a small slim figure beside him, her head scarcely reaching his broad shoulder.

He does not ask her for any vows, he does not even question if she loves him; perhaps he knows such questions would be superfluous. However that may be, he keeps his arm about her, and lifts her face from the hiding-place that his breast affords.

There are tears in her eyes, and seeing them Hugh rejoices, knowing what has brought them there, feeling the parting which must come will be as grievous to her as to him.

He draws her arms about his neck, and bends down until his face is bowed upon the glory of her dark hair.

"My little love, my bonnie! bid me stay and I will obey you, even at the risk of offending my father."

"No," she says, tremulously. "You must go, Mr. Stamer."

"Hugh, if you please. Sweetheart, from today you must be my first and last consideration; and it shall not be long before I return to you. I shall tell my father all about you on my arrival at New York, and he will probably hasten my return."

She does not see the little grim smile that plays about his mouth, or she might feel some fear as to his father's reception of the news.

"But you must tell him we are poor, very poor. Perhaps he won't be so pleased at your choice when he knows that. You said he adores money. What else shall you tell him? That I am stupid and ignorant, but that—that you love me!"

Hugh laughs.

"I shall certainly say nothing about stupidity and ignorance. I shall tell him you are the daintiest, prettiest little piece of womanhood in all England, that your eyes are bright as stars, your voice as sweet as—"

"Oh, hush!" cries Gipsy, covering her ears.

"You will make me so very vain that I shall become unbearable," and she lifts her bright, saucy face with a roguish smile, and Hugh, being only mortal, seizes the opportunity to kiss her once again.

"You are a very bold boy," she says, vividly blushing, "and I don't know what punishment you deserve."

He whispers something which heightens her colour still more, and she makes a feint of leaving him, only he has her so securely in his arms that escape is impossible.

From the garden Ted's voice is heard calling them loudly, and Gipsy hastens to smooth her

hair, and arrange her ruffled laces. Then she says, swiftly,—

"Hugh, don't tell the boys yet; they will tease me so unmercifully."

"I did not intend doing so. I am waiting for your father's arrival. I shall speak to him first, and can only hope I may make a favourable impression on him."

"Oh, I'm sure you will," emphatically. "He is not hard to please, and he never denies me anything."

They return to the garden together, and are greeted by Ted in a most unceremonious fashion.

"Hullo! here you are. Would it trouble you too much to remember that some folks have healthy appetites, and that we lunch at one!"

"We are above such earthly considerations," laughs Hugh, whilst Gipsy looks very conscious; "and really it is so hot, we were tempted to remain in the meadow until sundown."

The four then adjourn to the house, Gipsy hastening to her room to put a few touches to her dress, a new ribbon about her slim waist, a fresh flower at her throat.

For a few minutes Ted and Frank are left alone together. The former says anxiously,—

"I begin to wish you had not brought Stamer here for Gipsy's sake. You know he may mean nothing by his marked attentions to her, but she accepts them as earnest, and I am inclined to believe is far from indifferent to him."

"He is too good a fellow to play fast-and-loose with any girl," Frank answers, warmly, "and it would be a splendid match for Gipsy."

"What would old Stamer say to the alliance? From all I have heard from Hugh he is not a long remove from a miser; at all events, he worships gold with all his heart."

Then, as their guest enters, conversation drifts into another channel, and it is not again resumed, as Frank leaves the following morning, his holiday having expired, and Ted does not care to open his mind to Alf.

When Frank is gone Hugh saunters into the garden, and, finding a shady nook, throws himself upon the grass, and begins to read a letter he has drawn from his breast pocket.

There is a frown on the young man's brow, and the line of his lips grows hard under the brown moustache as he lingers over the written words,—

"DEAR HUGH,—

"I confess myself annoyed to find you are staying with Julian Rosseter, but, of course, you were utterly ignorant of his antecedents; it remains for me to enlighten you upon that point. Long ago, before I left England, I knew the man; we were friends for many years, and our first quarrel took place when your mother rejected him for my sake."

"But after a while the difference was partly forgotten, and intercourse between us renewed. At that time the California mines were opened and we both speculated, but Rosseter to a most foolish extent."

"The result was that I lost a few hundreds, he almost all he had; and he accused me of having led him into the affair. He was compelled to sell his estates, I purchased them, and sold them again at a good profit to Lord Bradburne."

"From that hour we were deadly enemies; but this did not affect me in the least, as immediately after your mother died I left England for here."

"Under your present name Rosseter, of course, does not recognise you, as I only assumed it when a friend of mine died, leaving me the bulk of his fortune."

"Your true name is Danesworth, of the Sussex branch of Danesworth. I must request you at once to leave Rosseter's house, as I would not have you accept his hospitality one hour longer than is actually necessary. By-the-way, so far as my memory serves me, he had a daughter who, if she still lives, must be of marriageable age."

"Pray do not allow yourself to get entangled with her, as such a union could be productive of nothing but dissension between us; and I frankly own, unless you marry to please me, you will receive nothing from me."

"Your cousin Annabel has just returned from school, and, according to my ideas, is extremely pretty, and not too clever. Her fortune would add considerably to yours, and when your youth has passed you will find nothing is of value but gold."

"I expect you home by the third of September at the latest, when I desire your marriage may be arranged without delay. I do not intend Annabel to fall a prey to any needy adventurer."

"Your affectionate father,

"JACOB DANESWORTH STAMER."

Hugh rises, his brow very dark, a sombre look in his eyes.

"Must I tell Rosseter I know his past? Must I confess my real name and parentage to him, and probably lose Gipsy? Is it compatible with honour to hide both? But, if I do, how can I ask Rosseter to give his daughter to a penniless fellow, with neither trade or profession to fall back upon? As for Annabel, I'm hanged if I marry her, let come what will! The only way out of the quandary is to make a clean breast of the matter, and leave the rest to Providence. But give up Gipsy, I won't!"

His face softens then, and when he hears her step upon the path, her clear voice calling him, he hastens with a smile to meet her.

"Why have you hidden yourself away so long, dear?" she asks, as he joins her. "Oh, I believe you've been napping."

"Indeed, no!" he answers, more gravely than usual. "I have been thinking over one or two unpleasant matters, and endeavouring to see my way out of the difficulty."

"Am I in any way connected with it?" wistfully.

"Not directly," he answers, feeling a lie is excusable if it will save her pain; "it was only a message I received from my father, which annoys and perplexes me a trifle."

"May I know what it is?" she questions, and he answers lightly, "he merely expressed a wish that I should return at once, as Annabel has left school, and he is anxious for us to meet. He had rather hoped that we should marry, but, of course, he will understand now that cannot be."

"Will he be very angry with us?" clinging to him in a sudden access of fear. "Will he insist that you shall marry her?"

"No, love, no; and even if he did I should refuse. I am my own master. But, Gipsy, if he should (and it is best to think of all contingencies), would my altered position affect your love?"

"No; oh! my dearest, no!" catching his hand and kissing it.

"And you are willing to wait for me, even for years? Because in such a case I should have my way to make."

"I would wait for you," the girl says, simply, "until we have both grown old; but I will never love you less, never be false to you. Love, love, I am frightened; it seems that a cloud has come over our lives, which, perhaps, may never pass away."

He clasps the slim form closer.

"You dear little goose, what ails you? I wish I had said nothing to you about my father's foolish whim; rest assured that I am yours now and for ever, and when he sees you he will love you."

So he strives, with pardonable sophistries, to calm her fears and bring back the smiles to the pretty lips, and his efforts certainly meet with reward, for long before the golden noon has come Gipsy is her old bright self, full of laughing rillery, of pretty, coquettish tricks, and loving tender ways.

She has as many moods as an April day. This bonny daughter of "old Rosseter's" is a trifle wayward and capricious, as is natural, when one remembers how from infancy she has been the spoiled and petted darling of the household.

But her heart is true and fond, her nature essentially sweet and unselfish, so that in her home she is commonly known as the "Sun-beam."

How swiftly the days which follow that declaration of love pass! How bright they are, for Hugh obstinately ignores all unpleasant things

whilst with her, and only at night gives himself up to disagreeable reflections.

At last the evening comes for Mr. Rosseter's return, and Hugh has determined he will say nothing to him concerning his love for Gipsy until the last night of his stay at Stokefield, hoping that in forty-eight hours he may win his way into her father's favour.

It is a glorious evening, and Ted has gone with Alf to meet Mr. Rosseter.

Gipsy sits with Hugh under a weeping ash, both apparently intent upon Poe's poems, but now and again the girl's eyes wander from the page and the warm colour steals slowly into her face; presently the smiles begin to dimple her cheeks and play about her mouth, until at last she laughs outright.

Hugh looks up in surprise.

"What is it, Gipsy? May I not share the fun?"

"Oh, yes," laughing still. "I was only wondering how papa will receive the news, and at the thought of his perplexity my gravity broke down. Why, he looks upon me quite as a child."

Hugh's face does not reflect the merriment on hers, and he heaves a deep sigh as he says,—

"I wish the ordeal was over, so that I knew the worst."

She puts her arms about his neck.

"You silly boy," she says, softly; "what have you to fear? He will love you if only for my sake, and when he knows you well he will think with me that you are the noblest, dearest boy in the whole world. How grave you are!" nestling closer. "I hardly know you in this Sabbathical mood."

"Oh!" drawing suddenly away from him; "how provoking! Here is Harry March."

As she speaks the garden-gate is swung open, and a young man of rather pleasing appearance enters.

He glances at the flushed face of the girl, the annoyed expression in Hugh's eyes, and he knows in that instant how it is with them. But if he feels any surprise, if any pain stirs at his heart, he makes no sign, but advances unflinchingly, and with outstretched hand.

"I should not have come this evening, knowing your father is returning, Miss Gipsy, but Mr. Haskins asked me to call with a message to Ted, and I could find no reason why I should excuse myself."

"Ted is out; he and Alf have gone to meet father. Won't you stay until they return? They will be pleased to see you."

"No, thank you; I must be getting home; but I'll come round early in the morning."

A few more words pass between them, then Harry March takes his leave, and the lovers are alone again.

There is a momentary silence, broken by Hugh.

"That fellow is a good sort, and the only rival of whom I need be jealous. Take care you don't fall into your old weakness whilst I am away, and flirt with him."

"Oh!" says Gipsy, loftily, "my reformation is far too real for that; flirtation has no charm for me now! But when you grow weary of, and desert me, I shall most certainly decline upon Harry March. He has one great recommendation in my eyes, which is, he has no living relatives. Oh! I wish you had not! everything would be so smooth then! But, as it is, I am afraid; and the thought of the future is like a nightmare to me."

"Then don't think," laughing, in a somewhat forced way. "Take the gifts the gods send, asking no questions, and content to live only in the present."

"That seems Epicurean, and reminds me of the motto, 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow ye die.'"

"I did not mean it to do so. But, Gipsy, I have a vast contempt for folks who are always going out of their way to meet or anticipate trouble. So long as one is cheerful, and keeps a brave heart, things never look so black. Hope is a good thing alone, but, united to courage, it is sublime!"

The sound of footsteps along the road rouses them, and Gipsy, starting from her seat cries,

"It is father!" and darts like a butterfly across the garden.

In an instant she is in Mr. Rosseter's arms, caressed and caressing, her face glowing, her eyes flashing under the rays of the setting sun.

As Hugh advances, and marks the love and pride on the elder man's face, his heart rises within him: "Surely," he thinks, "loving her so well, he will deny her nothing that can add to her happiness!"

Mr. Rosseter likes his frank bearing, and welcomes him most cordially; then, hearing how near his stay is to a close, loudly exclaims, and insists that he shall remain with them at least for a week longer.

"I wish I could," Hugh says, heartily, "but I am due at New York on the third of next month; still, I trust I shall return in the course of a few weeks," and here he involuntarily glances at Gipsy, who avoids his look.

But the glance is intercepted and interpreted aright by Mr. Rosseter, who sighs to himself, and wonders, with a sort of vague pain, if Gipsy returns the young man's love; and, if so, how he can spare her from the home she has always made so bright!

The first evening passes pleasantly away. Gipsy sings to them the quaint old songs she knows her father loves, and plays soft little melodies, grateful to the ear, and which Hugh will remember to the day of his death.

She is not a clever musician, as she had said, but she plays well enough to please the home-circle, and does not let slip any of those fashionable fantasies upon them, in which one has so much difficulty to discover even a thread of melody amidst the endless variations. Her voice, too, if not powerful, is sweet and bell-like in its clearness, and Hugh thinks what happiness will be his when it sounds always in his home, breathing nothing but love and tenderness for him.

The young man had never known the pleasures of a happy home; his father had always treated him with sternness, more befitting a schoolmaster than a parent, and of his mother he has but a vague and shadowy memory. His best days had been those spent at Trinity College, Cambridge, until indeed, he visited Stokefield, there to find the love of his life in "old Rosseter's madcap daughter."

The next day passes swiftly and quietly by, and the last of Hugh's stay dawns. Gipsy's spirits are at a very low ebb, and her lover catches the infection of her mood, though in a less degree.

Soon after breakfast they adjourn, as usual, to the meadow, where Hugh catches and saddles the old grey pony, and lifts Gipsy into the saddle, walking by her side round and round the meadow. The pony, like Gipsy, is very small, so that Hugh's face is well-nigh level with the girl's, a fact he is not slow to notice, and take advantage of.

As he leans towards her with a lover-like gesture he is wholly unaware that Mr. Rosseter is watching them from the garden.

"Ted!" the latter calls softly to his son, "come here," and when the young man joins him he asks, abruptly, "Is there anything between your sister and Stamer?"

"A little air at present," rejoins Ted, laughing; "nothing more substantial."

Mr. Rosseter looks vexed. "I don't want any foolery now. Remember, we know next to nothing of him, and Gipsy is—"

"The apple of your eye, father. Well, seriously speaking, I believe Stamer loves her, and she is not indifferent to him. The only fear I have concerning the affair is that old Stamer will 'turn up rough,' for he is a miserly 'old hunk,' and gold is his god."

"Has young Stamer any property in his own right?"

"Not a sou. He is entirely dependent upon the old man."

"And no trade or profession, Ted? No? Ah! that is bad. Well, I must hear what the young man says, and trust that I may be guided aright in my decision for Gipsy's sake."

"Yes, she must be our first consideration," Ted

answers, gently, for the girl is the light of the home, the pride of their hearts.

This evening Gipsy dresses with especial care, because this is the last time Hugh will see her for many days, and she wishes him to carry away the memory of her as she appeared at her best. So she coils the dark masses of hair about her small head, fastening them with a pearl dagger. Her dress is white, and of some gauzy material, trimmed with lace and white ribbons; at her waist and bosom she wears clusters of vivid scarlet poppies, and about her throat a string of fine pearls, almost the only ornament saved from the wreck of their fortunes.

As she enters the dining-room, her face softly flushed, her eyes bright, yet tender, Hugh's heart sinks, lest after all their love and longing he shall lose this dainty, winsome girl, and he fears to think what a long life spent without her may mean.

She is very quiet throughout the meal, and both father and brother forbear to question or tease her, because her secret has grown so very palpable of late, and they know what the coming parting means for her; at least, they believe so now.

Afterwards she walks with Hugh in the garden, and the ready tears will rise and fall as he speaks of to-morrow, and she can find small comfort in his assurance that he will rejoin her in a few weeks.

It is late when they go in, and Gipsy slips upstairs to her room. Hugh enters the drawing-room, where he finds Mr. Rosseter.

"I wish to speak to you, sir."

"Very well. Sit down. One can talk more comfortably so."

Ted and Alf go out, and father and lover are alone!

CHAPTER III.

THE young man hesitates a moment, then takes the chair Mr. Rosseter indicates; he is evidently confused, and not a trifle anxious.

"What is it you have to say, Stamer?" questions Gipsy's father.

Then Hugh speaks with a frank manliness which is, perhaps, his greatest charm, and recommends him to Mr. Rosseter's favour.

"I want you to understand, sir, that I love your daughter and have spoken to her. I, perhaps, should have waited for your consent, but you were once young yourself, and will remember that one cannot always control one's impulses and affections."

"I have seen that there is more than mere friendship between Gipsy and yourself, and was prepared for this. Will you tell me what she says about the matter?"

"She bade me come to you, sir; she is willing to trust me."

"You, of course, know I can give her no dowry; if you take her it must be for herself and herself only."

"That is all I wish. May I regard myself as her accepted suitor?"

"You forget," with a slightly whimsical smile, "that as yet I know nothing of you, save that your father is a reputed millionaire. Have you thought that he may be unwilling to receive an almost penniless girl into his family?"

"I have thought of that," flushing deeply, because he remembers his father's advice not to get 'entangled with Rosseter's daughter,' "and I feel bound to tell you how matters are with me. My father has determined I shall marry my cousin, Miss Annabel Frost, an heiress, but when he sees the girl I have chosen he can but consent to our union. Still, I have considered the pros and cons of the case, and should be resent my conduct there is nothing for me but to gain my own livelihood as best I may; but Gipsy has promised to wait for me until I can provide her a home."

"So, so," smiling; "you youngsters have arranged all these trifling details without my assistance. But," with a touch of pride, "Mr. Stamer must be made to understand that a Rosseter does not give his daughter to any

author however wealthy he may be, unless he has some other and more solid recommendation than mines, which may take wings to themselves at any moment. Can you tell me nothing of your family?"

"Very little, sir, and I am afraid, from something I have recently heard from my father, that little will not impress you favourably. I debated in my own mind if I should be justified in withholding it from you, but have determined to make a clean breast of it, feeling nothing good can ever come of concealment."

Whilst he speaks, Mr. Rosseter regards him perplexedly, and when he has finished says,—

"Of whom is it that you remind me? In the last few days I have found myself wondering if I could have seen you before. Your eyes and the trick of your smile both seem so familiar to me."

Hugh flushes hotly.

"You knew my mother, sir; and people say that I am like her. Until a fortnight since I had no reason to believe my name was other than Stamer."

Mr. Rosseter interrupts him hastily.

"What was your mother's name?"

"Violet Croable; my father is Jacob DANESWORTH, of the Sussex branch of the family."

Such a look of loathing and hate flashes into Mr. Rosseter's eyes, such quivering rage twitches about his lips, that Hugh is more than a little startled.

"Good Heavens! You—his son, my girl's lover! It is too horrible!"

"Sir, I know all. My father told me the true reason for this enmity between you."

"That is false," coldly. "Jacob Danesworth could never speak the truth under any circumstances."

"I must beg you to remember I am his son."

"I am unlikely to forget that; I wish I had known it sooner. Now I can only hope that Gipsy, being young, will suffer no great harm, and in time love a man to whom I can give her with perfect trust."

"Do you mean," and Hugh's voice was harsh with fear, "do you mean, sir, that you will not give her to me?"

"That is precisely what I wish you to understand. Personally I like you, but there is bad blood in your veins, and soon or late it will show. Then Heaven help my poor girl, if she should be your wife!"

"You would extend your hate of my father to me—prolong the feud until our houses are like those of Montagu and Capulet. Both you and Mr. Danesworth Stamer are willing to sacrifice the happiness of your children to gratify a personal hate—"

"Silence! You are ignorant of the wrongs I have suffered at that man's hands. Sit down, and listen patiently a moment whilst I tell you my version of the story, which you may believe or not, as it pleases you. You have your mother's eyes and smile, but for that I would not stoop to explain to a child of his."

All the while he speaks in low and concentrated tones. His face, usually so pleasant to look upon, seems suddenly fossilised, and his eyes are full of malignant rage.

"I was Violet Croable's accepted lover, but your father (my so-called friend) won her from me by lies and subtleties, until in a moment of pique she married him, to regret it her whole life-long. He was poor (comparatively), and I rich. So when the Callisford mines were opened, he came to me and borrowed moneys ostensibly to purchase shares."

"I did not then know his treachery, and although he had married the only woman I ever loved he was very dear to me, partly for his own sake and partly for hers."

"I, too, had married; and my wife, a good, true woman, warned me against my friend. With woman's instinct she read him aright; but I, like a blind fool, trusted to him, and what I thought my own superior judgment, so working into his hands, and making shipwreck of my life and fortune. Day by day he came to see me with stories of the fortunes to be realised through the

Callisford mines, and told me that he should purchase other shares."

"Gipsy was born then, and I thought I should like to add to her fortune, which would be small, owing to the fact that I had also three boys to provide for. So I bought shares largely, and dreamed dreams of fabulous wealth; then woke one morning to find that they were valueless, and I a beggar, save for my wife's small income."

"It transpired, too, that Jacob Danesworth had invested but very little in the concern, and that when he was requested to render in the accounts (he was treasurer to the company) he refused to do so. He fled the country in secrecy, and probably assumed the name of Stamer the further to disguise his identity. But before his defalcations were discovered my home was in the market; he bought it, and sold it again at immense profit to Lord Bradburne. Altogether he netted a very considerable sum. Before he went your mother and I accidentally met, and I then learnt by what falsehoods she had been betrayed, and knew, too, that she loved me still; the knowledge of her husband's treachery and crime doubtless hastened her end. She died before he could get her away."

"Judge now for yourself, Hugh Stamer, if I would give my child to the son of such a fiend as my one-time seeming friend."

"Will you condemn us both to suffer for my father's sin?" Hugh asks, hoarsely; "and how can I tell if your statement is true? I must have proof before I believe such wild accusations."

"You want proofs—you shall have them."

Still with the same stony deliberation, he rises, and opening a desk takes from it a letter written on highly glazed paper, and still retaining a faint odour of lilies. The writing is in a delicate, feminine hand, which Hugh instantly recognises as his mother's, from old letters he had once found in her drawers.

Mechanically he reads,—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—When we spoke together yesterday you learned that I was not false to you as once I seemed. Now, alas! I must beg you to pardon my husband even a greater sin than his early one against you—for my boy's sake I ask this great boon of you. From his own lips I learned last night that he has systematically worked your ruin to revenge himself on you for having won and kept my love. More I dare not say; but when you think of me let your thoughts be kind, for my lot is very heavy—my heart is broken."

"VIOLET DANESWORTH."

Hugh sinks into a chair, and buries his face in his arms. Not a word, not a groan bursts from him, and Mr. Rosseter stands over him with an expression akin to triumph in his eyes.

In this hour the man's whole nature is transformed, and he can even take pleasure in Hugh's misery and shame. It seems part-payment for the years of anguish he has suffered through Jacob Danesworth.

Thus he stands, with knitted brows and flashing eyes. Suddenly he reaches forward, and touches the young man lightly upon the shoulder.

"You will forget soon," he says, coldly. "You are his son!"

"And my mother's!" For her sake, by all the love you bore her, by all her anguish, and her broken heart, have compassion upon me! For Gipsy's sake I will forego parent, home and wealth. Try me—test me as you will—only don't forbid me to hope. Think a moment what your decision will mean for Gipsy! If my misery is nothing to you—if my entreaties fail to touch you—surely you will not be blind and deaf to hers."

"She is a Rosseter; and when she knows the stain upon your name, the treachery and guilt of your father, she will feel with me that such a union as you propose can never be. I am sorry for you; but you must suffer for Jacob Danesworth's crimes."

"Yet the Mosaic law was long ago repealed, and I have heard that the sins of the fathers shall not be visited upon the children."

He stretches out one hand to Mr. Rosseter; it trembles like a weak woman's, and the veins are blue and swollen.

"I have said all that is necessary. My decision is final."

Hugh rises.

"Then whatever happens lies at your door, and you alone can be held guilty."

"I rely upon you to bring no persuasion to bear on my child, so that she leaves home in secrecy, and with you."

"Thank Heaven, I still hold my honour intact! You have nothing to fear from me. I will leave Gipsy to-morrow, promising to see her no more until she is of age, when she may ask for herself."

"Thanks for the concession. In three years she will forget her girlish love-dream. I have no fears on that score."

Hugh moves to the window and looks out. His face is white and set, and in his eyes is a very midnight of despair. Long he stands there, until the silence of the room grows painful, and Mr. Rosseter breaks in by saying, inconsequently,—

"Well!"

Hugh turns and confronts him, looking in that moment so like the dead Violet as Julian Rosseter had last seen her that for a space his heart relents; but he gives no sign of this, and Hugh says,—

"I am glad if you can believe it well. At present I cannot share your hopeful view of the case. Of course, after what has passed I must leave here with all possible speed; but you will give me shelter for to-night, and grant me an interview with Gipsy in the morning! It is not much to ask of a man who has ruined one's life," with a bitter laugh. "One other favour I have to beg. Perhaps you will grant it for the sake of the love you professed to feel for my mother."

"Young man, the world has used me too roughly for me to wince under the gibes of an angry fellow-creature. Ask what you will, and if it is in my power to grant it I will—for her sake."

"Then before we (Gipsy and I) meet, tell her this story as you have told it to me. Let her know why I set her free—for the present."

"It would be well for her to remain in ignorance of the reasons for which I decline to receive you as a son. Pity may keep her love alive the longer, and it is expedient she should forget."

"You expect too great a sacrifice from me; if you will not explain all I myself will do so. She may know me as the son of a fortunate felon, she may learn all my shame, but she shall never believe me false. Perhaps she, too, will hate me—for I do not doubt you will tutor her well—but she cannot despise me."

"I will do as you wish. Most men would have made a different choice to yours, but let it be as you will."

Hugh moves to the door; there he pauses and looks full into the other's eyes.

"I have a conviction that you will regret this night's work; for Gipsy's sake I hope it may not be so. No, thank you, we will not go through the farce of shaking hands. I do not feel particularly grateful or affectionate towards you."

He goes out and upstairs, slowly and heavily, to his room. There are tiny tables scattered here and there, each with its vase of sweet-scented flowers, which her hands have arranged; the window is open and the clustering honeysuckle creeps in to add its perfume to that of the gathered flowers.

Hugh sits down and pushes aside the curtains, looks down upon the fair garden where he and Gipsy have so often walked, but where they will never walk again. A groan breaks from his lips, and he clenches his hands in his impotent rage and revolt against fate.

"Is it not enough to know the name of which I have been so proud is stained by treachery and theft (for it was theft); is it not enough to know this, without having the loss of my love added to my burden?"

Thus his thoughts run, and his heart is very bitter against all the world. It seems to him in this hour that every man's hand is against him.

and he, like some wild thing driven to bay, has turned upon the world with all the fury of despair.

The long, slow night wears on; the grey dawn comes, and he wonders how Gipsy will receive the news; with what words, what a look will she greet him! He does not guess his story is already known to her; that on the snowy bed in her dainty, lavender-scented room, the girl is lying face downwards, the sheets thrust into her mouth to choke the sobbing laughter which will rise from her heart to her lips, almost strangling her. He cannot see how the nails pierce into the delicate palms of the little clenched hands, nor know the cry which rises from her soul, "My love! my love! I cannot let you go! Oh, Heaven! that I were dead!"

Then come the cheery sounds of every-day life; the pleasant stir in the rooms below, the crowing of cocks, the lowing of the cows in the meadows beyond; nothing is changed—nothing save life for these two lovers.

Hugh rises and tosses his things into a portmanteau, then waits until the breakfast-bell rings; wondering much if Gipsy is yet down, he goes to the breakfast-room to find it untenanted, save by Ted and Alf.

Both greet him cordially. It is evident his father's crimes have not altered their regard for him. Ted excuses Mr. Roslister on the plea that he feels Stamer would rather see him no more.

"And Gipsy!" the young man questions, glancing round with weary eyes.

His face is so haggard, his voice so changed, that Ted says impulsively,—

"Don't take it too much to heart, old fellow, it must come right in the end, and Gipsy will see you at nine in the meadow."

Alf urges him to eat, piles him with all manner of viands, but all to no purpose, and at last in mercy they leave him to his own most bitter reflections. He seizes an early opportunity to leave them, and makes his way at once to the meadow.

As he enters he sees Gipsy, and hearing the gate swing back, she turns. When he sees the change one night of anguish has wrought in her, the fear and woe in her lovely eyes, his manhood melts, and he stretches out his hands to her with a groan. With a low wild cry she runs to him, throws her arms about him, sobbing madly.

"Do not, do not leave me! Oh! Hugh, take me with you—take me with you!"

When he knows she does not hate him, or shrink from him, when he feels that his father's sin has not weakened her love, half the burden is lifted from his heart. He raises her face between his hands and kisses it again and again.

"Love, my bonny love! This has made no difference in your regard!"

"Yes, yes, it has; for now I love you more fondly, more deeply, than before, because—because I pity you. Oh, my poor Hugh! Oh, my heart! my heart! how cruel life is!"

Cruel—ah! yes, and this is but her first draught of the bitter waters. She has yet to learn, by terrible experience, that one woe follows another in swift succession, that the evil predominates over the good in this world.

"Tell me," she says faintly, "what you will do! Are you angry with me because my father has treated you so harshly?"

"Angry, child, no; but it is very terrible that we must suffer for a sin sinned seventeen years ago; that through no fault of our own we must be parted for ever."

"No, no! Oh, do not say for ever! How shall I live without you? Surely, surely father will relent when he sees how dear you are to me; and you, dear Hugh, will not allow Mr. Stamer to come between us."

"No, love, I owe him no obedience and no love," with gathering scorn in his eyes. "You are first and last, best and dearest with me now and for all time. How bitter your heart must be against him!"

"It is; but, dear, the hour is going so quickly let us forget him and speak of ourselves and our future. Oh!" breaking down suddenly, "I cannot bear this misery. I am not strong

enough; I am too young to be so very, very wretched."

As she clings to him, and as her tears fall fast upon his hands, he is tempted to forget the promise he has given Mr. Roslister. How can he leave her so lonely, so crushed with this her first trial? He knows what she has yet to learn, that this hour, despite its anguish, is less cruel than the months of waiting, of suspense and fear that she must endure; but he dare not hint at this, and he resolutely puts from him the temptation that has assailed him so fiercely.

"Gipsy," he says hoarsely, "listen, darling, I am not to see you again until you are of age. It is a long time to wait, but we are young, and we shall be faithful each to the other, and so soon as you have attained your majority I will come for you, and in the meanwhile I shall be working hard to win an independent standing for myself. Rest assured, darling, I will no longer touch money I now know was obtained by fraud and treachery. Heaven grant I may one day restore it all to you. Oh, love!" as her heavy sobs break the sweet stillness of the summer morning, "for my sake, be brave. I cannot leave you thus my darling heart; this is more cruel than even I imagined."

The small figure clasped so closely in his arms is writhing with emotion, and sobs seem to convulse her. Hugh's honest face is white and set, his teeth clenched. He feels miserably; he can offer her no consolation; in this hour of supreme anguish words are so cold and inadequate to tell all that is in his heart. So he is silent until she is spent with weeping, then he leads her to the trunk of a fallen tree, and sitting down draws her beside him.

"I must be going soon, little wife," he says, "and I want you to listen to me for a moment. When I am away your father will probably reiterate my father's crimes, and endow me with like attributes, until you will be ashamed of your choice."

"No, no!" she interrupts, passionately, "and I have frequently heard that sons resemble their mothers most—your mother was a good woman."

"Thank you, Gipsy," he says, gratefully, "but you must let me finish what I feel it is my duty to state clearly. There must be no misunderstanding between us. It is your father's wish that we should not correspond—can you stand the test of absence and silence for nearly three years! Remember, you will have ample time to reflect upon the step you have taken, to weigh my merits (if I have any) against my faults, and contrast the dishonour under which I live with your own unsoiled name and integrity."

"If you, too, had sinned, I should love you still with all my heart and with all my life."

He stoops to kiss the cheeks so flushed and swollen with weeping, then resumes,—

"Other men, my dear, will covet the prize I have won, will offer you perhaps more than I can ever give, for I am not going back to a life of wealth and indolence, and it may be you will learn at last that I am not first with you. No, do not speak yet. In such a case, my love, you will write me to that effect, for I could not endure to believe you mine, and returning to claim you find you had given yourself to another man. I leave you my address, and at any time, when I have left my father's house, Annabel will forward me what letters may arrive. Remember, too, my darling, that I shall not blame you over-much (because you are very young, and unused to the ways of the world), neither will I spoil my life because you are lost to me. And now—and now it must be good-bye."

He catches her to him in a madness of love and anguish. His frank, honest face shows very white and miserable in the full glow of the August sun; here is hidden on his breast.

"Kiss me," he says, hoarsely, "kiss me, my heart!"

Heart to heart, lip to lip, thus they stand, feeling all the world is against them and joy is a thing of the long ago past. Then Gipsy leans back a little, looks into his face with tear-filled eyes.

"I will never fall you, but day by day I will love you more dearly, more truly. You have called me your wife, and in Heaven's eyes I be-

lieve I am. Oh, Hugh! oh, my love! how can I be false to you!"

There has been a long, long silence; the dragon flies are sporting on the stream, the birds are singing gaily all around.

Gipsy lifts her head and looks out through her tears upon the lovely world, with eyes that fail to take in the beauty of it. She presses her hands to her temples in a bewildered way, then laughs lowly, bitterly.

"Go, go! Why do you stay, seeing we must part! Go, before I am mad with pain!"

He strains her to him, lays his lips once again to hers, then, with a groan, puts her away and hastens from the meadow, not daring to look back.

Gipsy watches him until he disappears in the house, then she flings herself down among the long, lush grass, and laughs long and softly. It is here that Ted finds her.

"Come in, dear," he says, gently. "Hugh has gone."

She looks at him blankly, then suffers him to lift her in his arms and carry her into the house, not knowing that all her happy days are over.

CHAPTER IV.

In a handsome room of a palatial house in New York, two men stand face to face—father and son—but as unlike in feature as in character. The young man is very white and stern, travel-stained too, and in his haggard eyes is a gloomy look, wholly new to them.

The father is visibly agitated; it may be, despite all past harshness, he is really proud and fond of his son; it may be, too, that his crime has suddenly become odious to him, now that it is known to the young man.

However this may be, he trembles and quails under the fixed regard of those miserable eyes.

He asks, in a quivering voice,—

"And you have determined to leave me; you elect a life of poverty in preference to one of ease!"

"I have given you my final answer; I will not live on the proceeds of crime. When I leave your house to-day I leave it for good, unless, indeed, you will restore to Julian Roslister what you robbed him of so long ago."

Mr. Stamer (for by this name he insists upon being known) breaks into a tremulous kind of passion.

"It was all fair! I swear it was! It was only a struggle for supremacy—and I won; I had the brains, and that poor fool the money! Have I been so bad a father that you will believe any lie Roslister may choose to tell!"

"I believe my mother's written word," coldly;

"I could not rely even upon your oath."

"And may I inquire how you intend to live!" with a sneer.

"I hardly know yet; I only feel that I am strong enough, and sufficiently in earnest, to win a place for myself in the world."

"You understand, that in the hour you leave me you forfeit all claim to my remembrance; that not one farthing of my wealth shall come to you!"

"I am aware of that. You fear I should refund what you gained by so much crime. I know now why you left England; and I wish to Heaven I had died before I learned what manner of man you are!"

Mr. Stamer winces under the words. For a moment pride struggles with parental love—he is growing old, and there is none to love him if this one son turns his back upon him—so, after a pause, he says, in a weak voice,—

"If I consent to your marriage with Roslister's daughter, will you forego your Quixotic ideas, and remain with me!"

"I cannot afford to beggar myself of honour; and Roslister will never give Gipsy to me. When she comes to me it will be without his approbation or consent. Because I am your son and he hates me, and is glad to revenge himself upon me."

"Then why think of her!" querulously;

"there is Annabel; why not marry her! You

could not have the same objection to sharing her money as mine—it was made honestly!"

"If ever I marry, my wife will be Miss Rosseter! Pray consider that subject closed. Now I am going, father, and, because of it between us, I should like to part with a semblance of friendship," and here Hugh offers his hand.

But Mr. Stamer bursts into a violent passion.

"Curse you! Go! May all that you attempt prove a failure! May you suffer privation and want, so that in the end you crawl to my feet and beg for bread!"

Hugh answers calmly,—

"Do not fear that I shall ever seek assistance from you; if things come to the worst, I can break stones along the roadside. I might sink lower, for no man degrades himself by honest labour, however menial."

"Don't read me a homily, sir!" shrieks the old man; "go, go! I hate you, I—I curse you!"

He falls into his chair, an inert, helpless, frame; and his son, passing out of the room, closes the door upon him.

Hugh would be not a little surprised, could he know what follows, when the sound of his steps has died away in the hall, and doubtless touched.

Mr. Stamer rises and drags his weary, feeble limbs across the room, and watches from the window to see the last of that noble figure as it leaves home behind for ever. Hugh issues from the house, and then the old man lifts his hand in supplication, and moans out,—

"My son, my son! come back—come back! I will do anything you ask, anything you demand—only stay with me. I am old, and lonely, and wretched."

But his querulous accents do not reach Hugh, and he is fain to follow him into the busy street, and there entreat him to return. Then as he looks he sees Annabel coming towards the house; next he notices her quick, glad gesture as she confronts Hugh, and slips her little hand in his confidently. How he longs to hear what passes between them! Will she lure him back to home!

"Hugh," the girl, says, "dear Hugh, how glad I am to see you—but surely you are ill! How white and harassed you look!"

He smiles faintly.

"Annabel, I should have passed you in the street. You are so changed since we met—'so grown up,' and a fashionable young lady, too. I expected to meet a schoolgirl!"

"I am eighteen," with pretty demureness, "and I am out now."

She draws her slim figure to its full height, and regards him with half-laughing, half-serious blue eyes, which are clear and candid as a child's. She is very pretty in a blonde way, and there is a sort of appealing look upon her face that has a charm for many, and perhaps would exercise some influence upon Hugh, only that his heart is given so wholly to Gipsy.

"Come back with me to the house," she says, entreatingly. "I've so much to tell you, and so many questions to ask."

"I shall never come back any more;" then briefly he tells her the story of his parting with his father, and as she listens the tears fill her forget-me-not eyes, and rain down her cheeks.

People pass them, and glance curiously at them—the strong, honest-looking young fellow, the pretty, fashionably-dressed girl. Hugh sees this and draws her into an unfrequented byway, so that Mr. Stamer can see them no longer. Then he stinks once more into his chair, moaning to himself.—

"Her voice—her smile—her own boy. Oh! my son, my son!"

"What are you going to do?" questions Annabel, after a pause. "You will be very, very poor. Hugh, oh! Hugh, I am afraid for you," and she clasps her little, gloved hands about his arm in affectionate solicitude, which if he chooses will rapidly develop into love, for since her early childhood he had been a hero to her.

"I shall certainly be poor," he answers, gravely, "but I intend to turn my one talent to account. One day I shall be famous."

"But in the meanwhile how will you live! You must have food and clothing. Have you any money at all?" in sudden fear.

"A little," shriving to speak cheerfully.

Annabel suddenly takes out her purse—a dainty blue and gold trifles.

"Take this," she says. "I really do not want it, my allowance is so liberal. Oh! don't be angry with me. Accept it as a loan, and, Hugh, if you will give me an address I will forward you sufficient to maintain you until you can get employment. How proud you are!" petulantly, as he begins to refuse her offer. "After all, it is only a loan, and you shall pay me interest upon it, if that is any satisfaction to you."

"Upon that condition, then, I accept," smiling. yet touched, "and I will send you word what I intend doing. At present I think of returning to England. I shall not feel my changed position so greatly there as here—and I shall be nearer the woman I love."

She looks at him blankly, then says, a little brokenly,—

"May Heaven be with you, Hugh, wherever you go. Now I shall say good-bye, but this evening I shall hear from you, and will forward the loan I spoke of;" then with a hand-clasp they part, and Hugh saunters into a respectable, but poor part of the city to seek a lodging suitable to his means.

Six months have passed, and Hugh has long been established in small but comfortable lodgings in the neighbourhood of Leicester-square.

Thanks to Annabel's loan he has suffered no privations, although he is compelled to live frugally. He does not guess, and will never know, how the girl obtained the large sum of money she had forwarded him. Afraid to excite her uncle's suspicion or anger if she asked so great a sum of him, she had disposed of all her most valuable jewels, and that without a pang. Was not Hugh's welfare more to her than all precious stones!

He, in the meantime, had been singularly fortunate; many of his articles have found their way into popular journals and dailies, and in his leisure hours (which are few) he is busily engaged upon a one-volume novel.

His life is a lonely one, but he cheers himself with the thought that each week, each month, brings nearer the time for his meeting with Gipsy, and work is good, being done for her dear sake.

He sometimes hears of her from Frank, who "looks him up," and now and again tells him the Stokefield news.

In a short time his name begins to be known in literary circles; he is spoken of as a "man of promise," "a fellow not devoid of genius," and Frank takes care to acquaint Gipsy with these facts.

One morning Hugh Stamer wakes to find himself famous; his novel is out, and is already creating a wonderful sensation. There is scarcely an adverse critic upon it, and Hugh can hardly realise such encomiums as are being showered upon it can be for him.

The first edition sells with wonderful rapidity, and it is the same with a second and a third, and all the reading world is on the *qui vive* to know more of the man who, with one leap, has sprung so far up the ladder of fame; looks out anxiously for the new work upon which, report says, he is engaged.

Hugh does not alter his mode of life now that prosperity is coming to him, save that once in a while he accepts an invite to some grandee's house where he is *fêted* and lionised as the new author who has all but set the Thames on fire.

So another six months passes, and Hugh has contrived to repay Annabel, and to put by a small sum with a view to furnishing a home for Gipsy when the time shall come.

Then his second novel appears, and is more warmly received even than his first, and his position is established, his fame secure.

Through all the long months of the year Annabel's letters have reached him regularly, but not a line comes from his father; consequently, one September day, when he opens a letter in his handwriting, he is considerably astonished. It runs thus,—

"We parted almost in enmity, but you are my son, and I have a great regard for a man who does well by himself, so that I am willing to be on a friendly footing with you. This overture should have come from you, but I waive that, and will proceed to business."

"I am coming to England with Annabel and her companion Miss Tabitha Brown, and shall be obliged if you will hire a place for us not too far from town, so that we can visit you when we choose. You need not fear men will know me, and so put your virtuous self to the blush. I am so changed that none will recognise in Jacob Stamer the man they knew as Jacob Danesworth."

"I do not ask you to share our temporary home—I should not appreciate a refusal of my offer—and you need have no fear that any portion of my despoiled wealth will ever come to you. You may expect us on the fourteenth of October."

"JACOB STAMER."

So it comes about that Annabel, with her uncle and companion, who is also her chaperone, are inducted into a villa a few miles out of London, whose banks slope gently down to the Thames, and Hugh comes and goes how and when he chooses.

The change in his father moves him to pity; he is so bowed, so aged, so tremulous; and now and again the mask of sternness he has so long worn slips down, and reveals him as a loving parent, to the astonishment both of Hugh and Annabel.

The months fleet quickly by, and when the season begins, a lady friend introduces the girl to society, and soon her wealth and her prettiness win for her the title "belle of the season."

She finds great pleasure in her new life, enters into it with a wonderful zest, yet does not lose that freshness and simplicity which constitute her greatest charm, neither does she lose her love of homely pleasures and domestic pursuits; and yet there is a great change in her—a change which develops her beauty, makes it tenderer, graver, more womanly; and the reason for it is that she loves Hugh with all the fervour of a first passion.

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LOVE AND LOSS.

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CHAPTER XXI.

Mrs CROFT would have been very lonely after her brother's departure, but for the fact that she had her hands and her mind both full with helping the nurse to care for the poor wayfarer so strangely thrown on her hands.

As it was, her anxiety over Lillah was soon dispated by the receipt of a telegram from Mr. Rae, announcing that he had found his daughter safe in London, and that they would go on to Liverpool.

Several days later a short letter followed the telegram, saying they had decided to take a trip over to America for an indefinite stay. He believed that change of scene was the best way to wean Lillah from her infatuation for Brian Gascoigne.

No mention was made of the legacy that had so opportunely fallen to Lillah, but Mr. Rae enclosed a liberal cheque to his sister, and asked that she would use some of it in behalf of the woman he had brought home that night, stating that he had recognised in her a former servant of Lillah's mother.

Mrs. Croft began to take considerably more interest in the invalid when she learned this interesting fact.

She had always cherished a lively curiosity over Lillah's mother, and it had never been properly gratified, but the little knowledge she had made her thirsty for more. That she was beautiful, vain, and unprincipled, Godfrey Rae had acknowledged; but he did not even possess a picture of her, although Mrs. Croft fancied he

must have loved her well from the way he had exiled himself at her death.

She was anxious for the sick woman's recovery, for she fancied the woman could tell her more of Godfrey's dead wife than her brother had ever chosen to divulge himself.

So she was unremitting in her care, as were also the doctor and the trained nurse; but for several weeks the woman's life hung on a thread, and it was evident that exposure of that wintry night had been preceded by keen privation and almost starvation, making her hold on life so frail that she had almost let it go.

It was far into December before she became convalescent enough to impart her name and some curt information about herself.

"My name is Emma Goring, and I was in search of work," she said, rather sullenly; adding: "I'm a capital sick-nurse, but I could get no more work of that kind, and I thought I'd go out for a ladies'-maid, or even a cook, for I can do anything I have a mind to turn my hand to."

The old doctor, to whom she was talking, smiled benevolently, and beaming on Mrs. Croft, remarked,—

"I don't think you'll have to go any further for a job as maid of all work when you get strong enough, for my old friend here certainly needs a good domestic now that she isn't as young as she once was."

Mrs. Croft had never thought of the subject in that way before, but when her old friend, Doctor Gray, presented it so artfully to her mind, she consented to the plan, knowing that she would be very lonely in the quiet house, now that willful Lillah's bright presence was removed.

So when the snows of Christmas lay deep on the ground, the new servant was up and about the little house, serving her new mistress skilfully and well, but preserving a rather sullen and taciturn demeanour, as if somehow she had a quarrel with fate and could not be reconciled to some soury trick it had played upon her now or in past days.

While Mrs. Croft was wondering how to put to her some plain questions as to her service with her brother's wife, Emma Goring forestalled her by saying, in a sort of casual way,—

"When I got out of the train at the station I saw a man I used to know—Mr. Godfrey Rae. Does he live hereabout?"

"No," replied Mrs. Croft.

"Visiting, maybe?" with veiled anxiety.

"Yes."

"Oh! At whose house?"

"At mine; but he has gone to America now," returned Mrs. Croft, succinctly.

The woman started and muttered some inaudible words, as though she had received an unpleasant surprise.

"Perhaps you don't know that it was Godfrey Rae—my brother—who brought you in here out of the snow that night!" added Mrs. Croft.

"So he saved my life," Emma Goring muttered, grimly; "and you say he is your brother, Mrs. Croft!"

"Yes, and he told me he recognised you as a former servant. Is it true?"

"Yes; I lived with Mrs. Rae two years. It was when her eldest child was born. I suppose she has several children now, ma'am!" with eager inquiry.

Mrs. Croft stared at her in surprise.

"Then you haven't heard—you don't know—that Mrs. Rae died when little Lillah was five years old, and there never was any other child!"

"Dead! Mrs. Rae dead!" the woman cried with sharp regret, while a spasm of pain passed over her face, and she sprang excitedly to her feet.

"You must have been very fond of her," remarked Mrs. Croft, curiously.

"Fond of her! Oh, yes, naturally. I lived with her some time, you see, as maid of all work. Mr. Rae wasn't rich then, but perhaps he's better off now," with keen interest.

"No, and never will be; for it sort of took the heart out of him when Lillah's mother died. He brought me the child to rear, and went off wandering over the world to drown his sorrow."

Emma Goring's glum face relaxed in surprise, as she exclaimed,—

"Humph! I never thought he was so fond of her as that! All the love seemed to be on her side!"

"So she was fond of him!"

"Fond ain't no word for it. She just worshipped the ground he walked on. Her sun rose and set in him. She was grateful for a smile or a kind word, and mighty few she got for all that; for of all the glum, moody men I ever saw, Mr. Rae was the worst. I believe he hated his own life!"

"It was a guilty conscience maybe," suggested Mrs. Croft, watching her out of the corner of her eye, to see how much she knew.

"You mean that he had treated his first wife bad for her sake—yes, maybe it was remorse. I don't rightly know the facts, but I heard whispers," answered Emma Goring, coolly; adding: "There was something strange about it—his indifference to his wife even after the child was born, that she thought would bring them closer together. But, la," bringing herself up with a jerk, "this is all guess work on my part. Maybe he loved her in a reserved kind of way. Anyway, I'm mighty sorry she's dead. But where's the child?"

"Lillah! Her father came and took her away while you were ill. They have gone to America."

"There! the kettle's boiling over!" exclaimed Emma, rushing to the stove; and after that she avoided the subject of the deceased Mrs. Rae.

But there could be no doubt that she was sincerely sorry over her death, for she became glummer and more taciturn from that hour, and her quarrel with fate grew more bitter.

But she stayed on and on with the lonely widow, giving good service, and perhaps grateful for the comfortable home she enjoyed, while she certainly relieved the loneliness of the quiet home that echoed no more to the girlish footsteps of Lillah.

Mrs. Croft missed the girl more than she could have deemed possible. She had secret spasms of remorse over the rigid life she had led the poor girl, all on account of having had a poor opinion of her mother.

"I was trying to bring her up right, so she might not follow in her mother's footsteps; but maybe I was too hard on her," she mused, "and if I had her back here I'd tried to act a little different to the poor girl. Still, I can't think that anything I did to her was half as bad as Godfrey refusing to let her marry Brian Gascoigne. To the day of my death that'll be a mystery to me why he refused such a good chance for Lillah. A poor girl like her ain't never going to get such another offer. And they do say that since the Gascoignes came back to Idlewild, that Brian looks like a ghost. Mrs. Mason says they have a house-party for Christmas with lots of awful pretty girls, but that he don't care for any of them, though his proud mother's trying her hardest to marry him off to one of them. Well, well, maybe his luck and Lillah's may turn, and they'll marry yet. I do hope so, for I love to see a girl marry her first love."

There was one thing about her handmaid that did not altogether please the pious Mrs. Croft.

She discovered that Emma Goring was wholly irreligious.

She neither attended church, read the Bible, nor said her prayers at night—three facts that quite shocked her employer.

In kindly remonstrating with the woman, the widow found out that she cherished a grievance.

Her quarrel with fate was poverty.

"I will not worship a Being who makes such a difference between His creatures, blessing some with riches and happiness, and cursing others with poverty and woe," she said rebelliously.

And all Mrs. Croft's pious arguments made no change in her mood. She only answered, flabty,—

"I beg that you will not waste arguments on me, ma'am. I've heard all that before, and it don't alter my opinion at all."

Mrs. Croft found out that the desire of the

woman's heart was to have a snug little fortune of her own, and she would never have a good opinion of the Lord until her desire was gratified.

One day, while she was looking out of the front window, she saw Brian Gascoigne going past in a carriage with his mother, their rich fur robes and seal-skin garments gave evidence of their wealth and position.

"Who are those grand rich people!" she asked, enviously.

Mrs. Croft told her, and added with pardonable pride that the young man had been a suitor for Lillah's hand, but her father had separated the lovers.

"He was very foolish, unless he had some good reason," exclaimed Emma.

"He did not have any good reason that I could find out," returned Mrs. Croft, adding regretfully, "It would have been a splendid match for Lillah, I have heard that Brian's grandfather, a Southern planter, left him two hundred thousand pounds in his own right."

"I wish I knew how to get some of it from him," murmured Emma, gazing with covetous eyes after the vanishing carriage with its fortunate occupants.

And no thought crossed her mind that she was the possessor of a secret that the rich Brian Gascoigne would have sacrificed his whole great fortune to know.

CHAPTER XXII.

ONE golden July day almost three years later than the events of our last chapter, a little group of three persons stood on the deck of a steamer homeward-bound, ploughing her way through the blue waves towards Liverpool Docks.

They were Godfrey Rae, his daughter, and her friend Madame Soltaire, the latter having joined them abroad three months ago after a long correspondence, dating from the time of their meeting in London on the occasion of the frustrated elopement.

The actress had retired from the stage at last with a fair competency, declaring that she was weary of the exciting life, and desired to spend the rest of her days in quiet, away from the glare of the foot-lights. At Lillah's wish she had gone abroad in the spring, travelling with her young friend for several months, while every day of their companionship added to the strength of the bond of affection between their responsive hearts.

"I love you more than anyone else in the world," Lillah had said to her ardently more than once.

And the actress had answered as ardently, "And I you my dear. I wish that you were my daughter."

The words put a new thought in Lillah's head. Why couldn't dear, beautiful Madame Soltaire become her mamma?

What was to hinder her father falling in love with the charming woman, and making her Mrs. Rae, and thereby her step-mamma?

Lillah felt sure that she could love her as dearly as her own mamma—much more dearly in fact than she did her father.

For though she saw a hundred admirable things about him, and felt rather proud of him than otherwise, Lillah had never tried to overcome her resentment of the past for those years of neglect, and the cruel parting from her lover.

She believed that Mr. Rae and Mrs. Gascoigne had acted a wicked part in preventing her marriage, because of some old family feud that would have been healed by her union with Brian.

So she still preserved toward her father a certain amount of reserve like a thin crust of ice, and he, on his part, although admiring her grace and beauty, and sedulously careful and attentive to all her whims, still brooded over secret sorrows that made him half-oblivious to the present with the best of his heart buried in the dead past.

To Lillah came the sudden thought that to make a match between this strange father of

her and lovely Madame Soltaire might be conducive to the happiness of all three. Of herself she was sure that life would be far brighter with this fair woman for a companion than spent alone with Godfrey Rae, who would always represent to her the blighting of the fairest love dream maiden ever cherished.

She became the most designing little match-maker in the world, but she was so transparent that she could not hide her plans from the objects of her care.

They detected her schemes with secret amusement, and pretended unconsciousness, while inwardly rather amused at the little by-play. That each admired the other was natural, but it was not the admiration that deepens into love. Both had been deeply bereaved in a way that left no room for the budding of a second passion.

As for Lillah, those years abroad had been like the bursting of a promising bud into a perfect flower.

In a few months she would be twenty years old, and the promise of seventeen was more than fulfilled.

Her slight figure was somewhat taller and more rounded in its gracious contour, and her lovely face, and large, soft, dark eyes had gained a depth of expression—spirit blended with pathos—almost irresistible.

The gold of her luxurious, curling hair had a deeper, richer sheen as it rippled in a loose knot beneath the brim of her becoming little hat, a Parisian affair that matched her stylish travelling gown, for Lillah had developed a perfect taste in dress that was very gratifying to her father's pride.

Wherever she moved, she was the cynosure of admiring eyes, and a score of hearts had been laid at her feet—some of them most true and manly; but she turned from them with indifference, saying to herself that her life was spoiled by Brian's falsity, and she could never love again.

She called it Brian's falsity, always refusing to believe that there existed any better reason than a former feud between their parents for the breaking of their troth.

She believed that Brian was a coward, that he had too easily given her up; but for all that she had not ceased to love him, though she did not acknowledge this to her own heart.

If you had asked her the question, she would have sworn to you that she hated and despised Brian Gascoigne, and would not have forgiven him the slight he had put on her if he had implored her on his bended knees, so strong is woman's pride.

Yet, so weak is woman's heart that she shrank his image still in its deepest depths, and could not bid memory down—memory of the brief, blissful time of love when the world seemed to hold nothing for either save the other, when they had tried to thrust aside, with the passionate obstinacy of youth, every obstacle to their happiness.

"If Brian had been as brave as I was, less under the control of his mother, we might have been so happy!" she had said, regretfully, more than once to Madame Soltaire, who agreed with her views, and always answered,—

"You are right, dear. He was weak and cowardly, unworthy of such a golden heart as yours. I would forget him!"

"Oh, I will forget him. I despise him now!" Lillah answered out of her wounded pride.

Yet, as the prow of their noble steamer cleaved the blue waves, and she stood on deck under the blue sky and burning sun of July, her thoughts went before to her native land and to her lost lover so dearly loved, so strangely lost.

She wondered where he was now, and if he was married yet, for Aunt Croft, in one of her letters, had not failed to mention that there was such a report in the town. She added that it would not be Mrs. Gascoigne's fault if her son did not find a wife, for she kept idly full of visitors the year round, when she was at home, with pretty girls of all complexions, from brunette to blonde.

Lillah's thoughts often wandered to Idlewild, wondering what was transpiring there, and trying to picture to herself the beauty of the gay

young girls with whom Mrs. Gascoigne surrounded her son, trying to win his love from Lillah. It filled the girl's heart with secret, jealous agony that brought shadows of pain into her large soft eyes as she leaned against the rail and watched the dancing waves.

"How grave you look, Miss Rae, while everyone else is rejoicing at the home-coming. One would think you had left your heart behind you on foreign shores!" gaily exclaimed a young man, approaching her and gazing at her with admiring eyes.

He was a young Englishman returning home after three months' absence. On the first day out he had fallen a victim to Lillah's charms, and gladly renewed a former acquaintance with Madame Soltaire, in order to secure an introduction to the beauty.

As the actress knew him to be in every respect a most desirable parti, she was very glad to present him to Lillah, secretly hoping that he might manage to supplant Brian Gascoigne in her tender heart.

Lillah certainly found him interesting, he was so good-looking, with his six feet of athletic manhood, flashing dark eyes, and jetty hair and moustache, while with his ready flow of small talk he was very amusing. She accepted his patent admiration and his respectful attentions with the coolness of a belle accustomed to adulation, letting him entertain her when she chose, and carelessly dismissing him when not in the mood.

Her mood was not very propitious now, and it was a very cold smile she gave in answer to his remark that she must have left her heart behind on foreign shores.

"All the heart I have I have brought back with me, although I must confess to a fondness for the New World," she answered; adding, "I am not enthusiastic over my return, because I have really no near relatives in England, and papa and I intend to resume our wanderings in our own country after a short rest."

Darcy Cathcart exclaimed, eagerly,—

"May I be permitted to know where the foot of the dove will first rest?"

"I think we shall probably spend a few days at Summerville, while maturing our plans," Lillah answered, carelessly.

Cathcart's handsome countenance beamed with frank delight.

He cried, joyously,—

"Summerville? How glad I am! Why, that is where I am going."

"Indeed!" smiled Lillah.

"Yes, if you do not forbid my following you there, which I should certainly do, even if I had not already made my plans. Oh, please don't frown upon me so, for indeed I have promised my aunt and cousin—who are there—that I will stay there with them awhile. In fact, I shouldn't be surprised if Brian came to Liverpool just to meet me."

Brian—Brian! The name struck her sharply, like a blow. She shut her lips tightly, and turned her head aside, lest he should see the mortal paleness that she felt overspreading it, while she chided herself for her weakness.

Suddenly a great shout arose from the crowd on deck.

They were steaming majestically into port, and on the shore they saw eager throngs of friends waiting to welcome their loved ones home.

Answering shouts came back from the pier, and handkerchiefs were waved while glad tears started into many eyes, it was such a glorious thing to be safe in port, having weathered all the dangers of the sea.

"Do you see any familiar faces on the pier, Miss Rae?" queried Darcy Cathcart, wondering why Lillah had turned her lovely face away so abruptly.

She looked back at him, pale but composed.

"No, there is no one that I know," she answered, and in spite of her pride her lip quivered.

It was such a dreary home-coming, after all, with no one so welcome her and smile a glad welcome. She felt a keen pang of envy of the happier ones by whom she was surrounded.

Madame Soltaire and Mr. Rae came up to them

and the actress said, with a little smothered sigh,—

"What a scene of joyous excitement and confusion. Parents waiting to greet sons and daughters, lovers to greet sweethearts! I am almost sad that there is no one to welcome us, Lillah."

"Madame," you are mistaken on your part," laughed Cathcart. "I see a group of reporters with their eyes fixed on you already, and only waiting till the gang-plank is thrown out to rush upon you, demanding to know if it is not likely you will return to the stage again. Tomorrow morning they will report in their papers that you have returned from America more beautiful than ever from your long rest, and with a new play that will charm the theatre-going public this winter."

Madame Soltaire darted behind him exclaiming,—

"Do help me to escape them. I do not wish to be interviewed. I belong to private life now."

"Mr. Rae, will you kindly help the madame to escape the newspaper men, and I will lead Miss Lillah ashore," exclaimed Darcy, coolly drawing Lillah's arm through his and rushing forward with the tumultuous throng as the gang-plank was thrown out.

Oh, what a Babel of noise and confusion! But through it all Lillah could hear the young man whispering ardent words to her, vowing that the past week had been the happiest of his life, that he adored her, and would ask no greater joy than to walk with her through life arm in arm as now, heedless of the rushing, jostling throng.

Would she give him one little word of hope to live on till they met again at Summerville? He knew he was presumptuous, but love was his excuse.

"Oh, you must not talk to me any more like this. I—I—" began Lillah in confusion; but just at that moment they stepped on terra-firma, and came face to face with a young man waiting there with a lady on his arm, at sight of whom Darcy whispered to his companion,—

"My aunt and cousin, the Gascoignes!"

Sky, and earth, and sea seemed to jumble and blend together in Lillah's confused consciousness as her startled eyes met the equally surprised ones of Brian Gascoigne.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was the most surprising and unwelcome rencontre in the world, that meeting between those four, Godfrey Rae and his daughter and Mrs. Gascoigne and her son.

Darcy Cathcart was the son of Mrs. Gascoigne's eldest sister, long since dead, and therefore peculiarly dear to her, so that wherever he went he always kept up a correspondence with Brian, of whom he was very fond. So it chanced that they had written him while he was abroad, of their sojourn at Summerville, and begged him to join them there on his return.

Later on the mother and son decided to meet him at the steamer, as he might feel it a lonely home-coming, his father also being dead, and his two married sisters being absent from the city.

From the pier they had recognised Darcy on the steamer's deck, but as he stood in front of his three companions they had not been identified, otherwise Brian would have gone away to avoid a meeting.

It seemed to Mrs. Gascoigne as if a most malignant fate had sent them there when she lifted her eyes and saw before her, Darcy, her handsome nephew, arm in arm with Lillah, while behind them walked Godfrey Rae with the beautiful Madame Soltaire.

It was a painful, almost a tragic rencontre, and entirely unavoidable, for Darcy Cathcart, unconscious of anything wrong, cried out almost boisterously,—

"How do you do, my dear aunt. Happy to see you, Brian," embracing them with effusion, and adding, to the pale, silent girl, who clung to his arm: "Miss Rae, let me present my aunt, Mrs. Gascoigne, and my cousin, Gascoigne."

A moment of shocked embarrassment was

followed by formal greetings—greetings as of strangers who had never met before.

Mrs. Gascoigne and Lillah simply bowed to each other, both pale and cold, but Brian held out his hand, saying, almost inaudibly,—

"I am glad to meet you."

Lillah bowed without speaking, and gave him her joy fingers in response. Their hands just touched and fell apart, and their faces were as pale as they would ever be in their coffins.

Darcy Cathcart, without observing anything unusual in the air, proceeded to present the others.

"Mr. Rae and Madame Soltaire, let me present my aunt and cousin, Mrs. Gascoigne and her son."

Again there were cold, surprised bows on either side, and the next moment Darcy found that Lillah's fingers had dropped from his arm, and the headless, jostling, happy throng had closed in between the two little groups, cutting them off from each other.

"Oh, I say!" he cried, in dismay, "we have quite lost my friends. Will you excuse me one moment while I follow and bid them good-bye!"

But Brian answered in a troubled voice,—

"My mother is almost fainting, Darcy. Will you let me take her to the carriage?"

It was quite true what Brian said. Mrs. Gascoigne's proud, dark head had dropped heavily against his shoulder, and her face was marble-pale, with half-closed eyes, while her breath came in slow, laboured gasps.

Somewhat, the sight of Godfrey Rae, with the beautiful actress by his side, had given her an almost insupportable shock.

Darcy instantly became all anxiety and attention, and with Brian's assistance he supported her to the waiting carriage.

She leaned back among the cushions with shut eyes, while Brian stroked her brow and hands with tender touches, and her nephew exhausted himself in wondering what had made her ill.

Brian answered evasively,—

"It must have been the great heat of the sun. She complained of the warmth of the weather while we were watching the steamer come into port."

The carriage rolled along toward their hotel, and Mrs. Gascoigne grew gradually better, opening her eyes presently and faintly apologizing for the fright she had given them.

"I am almost well again, and I think we can return to Summerville to-night," she said.

Cathcart's thoughts recurred again to his friends, and he exclaimed, regretfully,—

"I am very sorry that I lost sight of my friends, the Raes and Madame Soltaire. They, too, are going to Summerville, and if I only knew at what hotel they intended to stop I would go and persuade them to make a party with us going there."

"Please do not, Darcy. They might think us officious, being strangers," Mrs. Gascoigne cried, hastily.

Darcy laughed roguishly, and answered,—

"I serve notice on you that you will not be strangers long, for I intend to make Miss Rae your niece if she will give her consent?"

"Ah!" cried Brian, in a strange tone of suppressed emotion; but Darcy did not notice, he was so absorbed in the thought of Lillah.

"Did you notice how radiantly beautiful she was?" he cried. "She is as graceful and stately as a young princess, and her feet and hands are exquisitely small and dainty. Her hair is a shower of gold, and such beautiful, large, soft dark eyes, so haunting and mummeric, I never saw in another woman's face. The first moment I met their full glance I realized that all was over with Darcy Cathcart."

"How long have you known the young lady, Darcy?" his aunt asked.

"Only from the first day we called for Liverpool; but the moment I saw her I was done for, and I believe if I had not secured an introduction to her soon I should have jumped overboard and drowned myself. Oh, I tell you, it was a case of love at first sight—on my side at least. I don't know how it is with her; but I was actually proposing to her as we came down the

gang-plank and met you, so I did not get her answer. But I shall at Summerville, of course. But as I was saying, I got an introduction through the lovely actress Madame Soltaire, who had been with them several months in America. She has retired from the stage now, and I'm rather sorry. I've known her several years, and she was an ornament to the profession—as good a woman as ever stepped."

"Perhaps she is going to marry Miss Rae's father, ventured his aunt inquiringly.

"I don't know. They would make a splendid couple, wouldn't they? And I know that the lovely Lillah would give anything to bring it about. She is devoted to the charming actress."

"How I hate that girl!" Mrs. Gascoigne thought, with secret, irrepressible bitterness.

"They are all coming to Summerville, and I hope you and Brian will find them as charming as I do—only Brian must not fall in love with my princess," continued Cathcart, blithely.

Brian only laughed, and just then the carriage drew up at the entrance to their hotel.

As Brian was helping his mother out she whispered,—

"If they come to Summerville we must go away the same day."

Meanwhile, the other party, quite as much disconcerted, had sought another hotel.

Lillah lay sobbing on a low couch, and Madame Soltaire knelt by her side, caressing her and murmuring low words of comfort.

"Do not think of him, my darling. He is not worthy of one regret. Only a coward would have deserted you as Brian Gascoigne did. I am sorry that Darcy Cathcart is his cousin, but that need not matter. He loves you very much, and I would be charmed to see you marry this manly young man."

"Oh, I can never love again! My heart was broken by Brian's falsity!" moaned Lillah, sobbing in unrestrained grief that she would not have shown to any one on earth but this sympathetic friend she loved so well.

"Forget him, dear," the other answered, as she had often done before, laying the golden head caressingly against her breast, and kissing the tears from the sad, dark eyes.

When Lillah had sobbed herself into calmness, she said,—

"Of course we will not go to Summerville now. I must not meet them again."

"No, we must not go to Summerville now," Madame Soltaire agreed; adding: "I shall go on from Liverpool to my home—a pretty country house left to me last year by an old maiden aunt—and, Lillah, I want you and your father to come with me as my guests."

"But perhaps we ought to go and visit Aunt Croft first," suggested Lillah.

"No; for you are in danger of meeting the Gascoignes there."

"That is true," sighed Lillah.

"So you will promise to come with me, dear?"

"If papa is willing."

When Mr. Rae was consulted, he accepted the invitation for Lillah, saying that he had business that would take him away for a short while, but would join them later on.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MADAME SOLTAIRE despised Brian Gascoigne so much that she was bitterly chagrined on learning that he was related to her favourite, Darcy Cathcart, whom she hoped to see Lillah marry.

Darcy had frankly confided his hopes to the actress, and elicited her sympathy in his love. She had promised to do all she could to help him win Lillah, and it annoyed her very much that, for a time at least, the ardent lover would be debarred from seeing the object of his love. Perhaps, too, if he should find out that love episode with his cousin Brian, he would not wish to marry a girl who had been so cruelly deserted on the eve of marriage. She guessed wrongly that the Gascoignes would very likely use all their influence against Lillah.

But, however much she worried, she could see no way out of the dilemma. Darcy had

abruptly parted from Lillah before he had taught her to love him, and she saw no safe way of bringing them together again in the present. Time alone could solve the problem.

It was a great disappointment not to be able to take Lillah to Summerville, where she knew that the girl's grace and beauty would create a sensation; but, of course, it was not to be thought of now. Lillah and Brian Gascoigne must be kept apart for the sake of the young girl's peace of mind.

But how handsome and manly he had looked—not at all like the weak coward Madame Soltaire deemed him. She found herself dwelling with pleasure on his handsome face and form, his dark-blue eyes, and brown, clustering hair.

"Much after the style of Lillah's handsome father. I fancy he might have looked like that when he was a young man, before the grey came into his brown locks, and the anxious lines into his face," she mused, thoughtfully; and her eyes grew grave, and her cheek pale with a sudden, startling thought that made her exclaim: "Good heavens! could it be!"

The line of thought thus started was most distressing, as evinced by the agitation of her face, and presently she muttered,—

"There may be a mystery after all. I will try to get at the bottom of it."

Meanwhile, Lillah, struggling with the heart-ache renewed by her encounter with her lost love, or her false love, as she preferred to call him, made a great effort to throw off the weight on her spirits and become herself again.

Lillah could not thrust Brian's image from her heart however much she tried and longed to do so. She could wear the mask of pride over her sorrow, that was all.

Her father hoped and believed that she was overcoming her trouble, and would have rejoiced as much as Madame Soltaire if she could have transferred her heart to Darcy Cathcart. He who had known the pangs of wounded love so well was eager to find a cure for his daughter's heart.

But all chance of this had been temporarily frustrated by her unexpected *rencontre* with Brian Gascoigne.

He felt that all the old ground would have to be gone over now and again, and cursed the evil fate that had worked against him.

He regretted that a sudden weariness of foreign shores had decided him to return to England, and made up his mind to take Lillah away again out of reach of the Gascoignes. This was why he had said that he was going away on business.

He had decided to make a home for himself and daughter in the South of England, where life would glide so softly amid wooing zephyrs, that it would seem like an Arcadia even to disappointed hearts like his own and Lillah's. There they would win forgetfulness of the past and hope for the future.

CHAPTER XXV.

MADAME SOLTAIRE guessed not of the intentions of Godfrey Rae, or she would have been most unhappy at the thought of parting from Lillah.

With each day the girl grew dearer to her heart, and it had become her secret fixed intention to make her home near to Lillah's wherever it should be, and never lose sight of her again.

Her love for the fair young girl was a passion of devotion. She would have sacrificed all she possessed to secure her happiness.

Yet Lillah seemed further away than ever from it now.

"Ah, my darling, you should not brood so morbidly over the past!" she cried, winding her arms around the fair girl's waist. "You have lost a lover it is true; but think how much more I have suffered when scarcely as old as you, losing a beloved husband and darling infant."

"You have lost a child! Dear heart, how I pity you!" Lillah cried, tenderly.

"Yes, Lillah, I have lost a little daughter, who would be as old as you are. It is for her sake I



"MY AUNT AND COUSIN, THE GASCOIGNE'S!" DABBY WHISPERED TO HIS COMPANION.

love you so dearly, because you are motherless, and I, alas! childless. It is a sad story, and some day I will tell it to you. Then you will see that my sorrow is greater than yours," sighed the lovely actress.

Lillah pressed her hand, and murmured,—

"You had their love till they died, and in Heaven they are waiting to welcome you home, still your own, still fond and true. But he I loved proved false, and another may win him from me. Were it not better if he had really died and belonged to me truly in Heaven?"

Oh, how sad the pathetic voice, how mournful the far-off gaze, piercing the listener's heart like an arrow!

She cried out, bitterly,—

"Ah, Lillah, you know not the depth of my bereavement. My husband is dead, it is true. I had his love but a little while, but it was bliss while it was mine, and I know it is waiting for me in Heaven, but oh, Lillah, my little one, my baby—oh! oh! oh!" and she dissolved in a passion of tears that startled Lillah from her own morbid grief and turned her to the task of the consoler.

Most gently, most fondly, most lovingly she caressed the agitated mourner, murmuring to her of the beautiful home, not made with hands, where her dead child was a precious angel.

"Think what sorrows she may have escaped by her early translation to Heaven. Is it not better thus than to have reached girlhood, as I did, to have her faith and love trampled in the dust, and her life saddened for ever!" she cried, earnestly.

"Ah, my dear, you do not understand. I had not finished telling you. She—my little darling, my unnamed daughter, did not die."

"Not die!" Lillah echoed, in bewilderment.

"No, she did not die, and I know not to this day whether she is alive or dead. She—was stolen—from me," sobbed the bereaved mother, letting her head fall on the sill of the open window where they were sitting.

Lillah was so shocked for a moment that she

could not speak. She could only throw her arms about the mourner and clasp her close with a love as true and warm as if she had been the dear lost daughter.

The balmy summer breeze swept in caressingly over the two fair heads nestled close together, while Madame Solitaire sobbed,—

"Now you understand why I love you so, my dear. Not but that your own beauty and sweetness is enough to charm any heart. But when I found you in London that first day, a motherless girl scarcely past childhood, forsaken by your lover, wretched, desperate, almost driven to suicide, my heart went out to you in a passion of pitying love as I thought, my own child, if alive, is no older than this one. Who can tell but that she may be in an even more grievous strait than this poor girl, whom I will try to advise and befriend, praying Heaven to deal as kindly with my dear lost little one."

"Oh, you were an angel to me in that hour!" cried Lillah, eagerly, gratefully. "Oh, I was wretched and desperate, as you say, weary of life and longing for death, almost driven by my humiliation to the awful sin of suicide. When I opened that door, intending to rush recklessly into the streets, careless of my fate, what terrible calamity might have happened to me if I had not found you standing like an angel on the threshold, sent by Heaven to save me from myself! You drew me back, you pitied and advised me, you made me a better girl than I ever was before. And since that hour your love has been to me more than words can express, my anchor of hope in a stormy life, my refuge from despair, my haven of love. Oh, I have been ungrateful, nursing my woes in spite of all your goodness and patience. I will try to be braver and stronger, indeed I will. I will always remember the keen sorrows you have borne while you wore a smile of comfort and cheer for me. And, oh, I pray that Heaven has given to your lost child as dear a comforter as I have found in you!"

The words, poured forth in a passion of grateful emotion, ended in a burst of sobs, and they

mingled their tears together and found subtle relief in each other's sympathy.

When they grew calmer, Madame Solitaire said, softly, in her low, flute-like voice,—

"I am glad indeed if I have been to you all that you say, Lillah, dear, for you were indeed in need of love and care when we first met. I have lavished on you a mother's love, while you have repaid me with a daughter's, I know."

"Yes—yes; but I could not fill up the void caused by your own child's loss."

"You have been a great comfort to me, dear, and I hope never to be parted from you in life unless you marry, and even then, dear, I shall manage to see you often, as a mother clings to a married daughter."

"How I wish that you and papa would marry!" cried the eager girl.

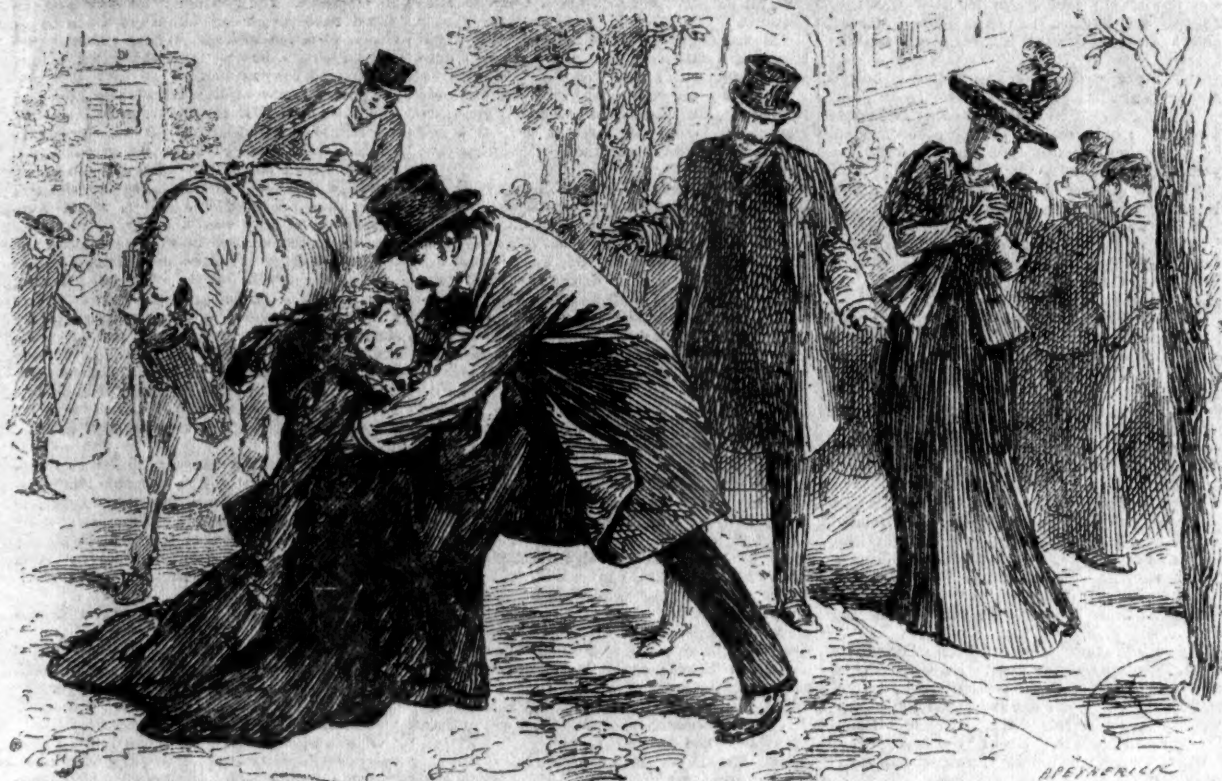
"My dear, do not nourish such a thought. It can never be. I am sure that both our hearts are buried in our dear ones' graves."

"It does not seem as if papa really loved my mother much, or he would care more for me," Lillah exclaimed, with the old resentment of her father's strange indifference.

"My dear, do not judge him harshly. Mr. Rae looks to me like a man capable of strong affections, but he also bears on his face the signs of tragic happenings that have blighted the promise of his life. If you will take my judgment for it, dearest, your father is a most unhappy and weary man!" continued Madame Solitaire.

To be continued.

THE enterprise of Messrs. Lever Brothers, of "Sunlight Soap" fame, is well shown in the production of their "Sunlight Year Book for 1898," a copy of which is before us. It is truly a treasury of useful information, and it cannot but prove a valuable work of reference for every home. It contains 480 pages, is well printed and neatly bound in cloth, and is offered at the marvellously low price of threepence.



MR. JAMESON DRAGGED LETTICE LITERALLY FROM UNDER THE HORSE'S HOOF.

JACK NORTH'S SECRET.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

LETTICE DENE, alias Miss L. Brown, sat in a very unrestful easy chair in the cheap flat where the Peytons had installed themselves, and tried hard to collect her thoughts and understand the very new phase of life in which she found herself.

She had been in France just a fortnight; she knew that her relations were seeking her anxiously, for she had read one or two appeals in the agony column of the *Times* which she felt could only be meant for herself. She thought Jack and Julia rather trying, when she had given up home and country, wealth and name to oblige them. Why could they not be sensible, get married and enjoy Ashcroft?

But it was not of them that she was thinking on this dull, cold, wintry afternoon. Lettice was very much perplexed about the Peytons, and in her heart a little sorry that she had cast in her lot with theirs.

She was not in the least mercenary, poor little thing, and she had seen too much of poverty at her Aunt Maria's to be alarmed at it. If fate had cast Lettice into a shabby country vicarage, with many children and little money, she would have been quite content to help the house mother to make both ends meet, and have spared neither her health nor strength in the effort; but it seemed to Lettice that the Peytons' poverty had something about it very like disgrace.

It was not only the dressmaker's revelations before they left London, but as Dora and her father grew more familiar with the little companion they did not trouble to hide their views of life from her, and Lettice found to her dismay that honour and honesty were very little understood by them.

To get all they possibly could out of other people, never to pay anyone if they possibly could help it, to as it were live on the follies of their

fellow-creatures, was evidently their method of existence.

"How shocked you look," Dora had said to her only that morning when Captain Peyton had made some smiling allusion to his debts, and the comfort that his creditors were not likely to cross the channel in pursuit of him. "Do you think we are very wicked?"

"Not wicked," said Lettice, simply, "only it is all so different from what I have been used to that I feel muddled."

"Well, try to feel unmuddled," said Dora, lightly. "There are two or three men coming to dinner to-night, and I want you to make things look nice. I am going out with papa."

Lettice did her best. It was a labour of love to her to make things look as dainty and pretty as possible, but when she found the dinner was to be sent in from a restaurant at ten francs a head, and remembered that Captain Peyton had refused his daughter a five-franc piece only that morning on the plea he was "dead broke," she felt as though there must be something very wrong somewhere.

"Are they friends of yours?" she asked, as she helped Dora to dress, and noticed how anxious the girl seemed about her appearance.

"I have seen them two or three times; they are young Englishmen papa has met at the club and helped to amuse themselves in Paris. There, I shall do now. What are you going to wear? That black makes you look too pale."

"It must do," said Lettice, cheerfully. "And as no one knows me it won't matter how I look."

"You foolish child! Until a girl is married, or at least engaged, it always matters how she looks. You might pick up a lover among our guests to-night."

Lettice shook her head.

"I do not wish to."

"Well, I should be glad enough to if he had plenty of money. Oh, I know what you are thinking—that there is someone in England I ought to remember; but he is poor, you see, and I want money."

The three gentlemen who entered presently with Captain Peyton, struck Lettice most unpleasantly. They were all prosperous-looking. They evidently belonged to the upper ten, but one seemed to the trembling girl already to have taken too much wine, another was boastful and arrogant, while the third was cold and stern, and looked at the two girls—or Lettice fancied so—as though they had been dirt beneath his feet.

Dinner was irreproachable, but Lettice had no appetite; all her nerves seemed over-strained. Why did these men accept Captain Peyton's hospitality when they evidently considered him beneath them? They must be used to very different surroundings. What brought them to the cheap, third-rate flat?

They left the table together, ladies and gentlemen, after the French custom. Dora closed the doors between the dining-room and the *salon* so as to cut off the noise of the servant's clearing-away.

There was a little pause. Then, at a glance from her father, she wheeled up a small table covered with green baize and placed it near the fire.

Cards and dice were produced, and the four gentlemen drew up their chairs and seated themselves at the table.

It was a long narrow room, and Lettice had settled herself at the further end with a piece of fine embroidery. Dora joined her when the game had actually begun.

"You must sing something presently; Mr. Jameson is fond of music."

Mr. Jameson was the man who looked scornful. Lettice privately doubted his being fond of anything.

"What are they doing," she asked; "playing cards? Why didn't you take a hand?"

"I! My dear girl, it would be ruinous. I am a wretched player, and should lose as much as my father wins."

"Does Captain Peyton always win?"

"Not always. It would not be safe; but nine times out of ten he is successful. He says some-

times he has the devil's own luck. You will see to-morrow I shall get the money I asked him for, and I am sure I want it. My gloves are disgraceful!"

"But you would not dress yourself out of money gained like that!"

"Why not? Money won at cards is just as useful as money earned in any other fashion. When you go shopping you are not asked how you gain every shilling you spend!"

"But it is terrible. I have heard of people being ruined in a single night at cards."

"Oh, we don't play very high," said Dora, frankly. "Papa is quite contented if he makes ten or twelve pounds at a sitting. We can't have these parties more than twice a week, and the expenses take off a good deal of the profit."

Lettice felt bewildered. The mystery was plain enough. Captain Peyton was a professional gambler; but—what did he want with a companion for his daughter?

Dora walked to a tray of glasses and decanters just come in, and dispensed liquid refreshment very prettily. She darted a glance at Miss Brown, but the companion did not move to join her. She sat still, her work forgotten, her face full of a new strange fear.

"You look as if you had seen a ghost!"

It was Jameson, the cold, sarcastic Scotchman, who had joined her. The game had finished without her knowing it, and he had declined to join in another. He could not have told why, but some strange impulse impelled him towards the silent little figure at the end of the long room.

She looked at him half-frightened. Something in her eyes touched his heart. He was a man of the world and not given to sentiment; he had read Captain Peyton's character pretty correctly, and had only come to-night to look after a friend, the youngest of the guests, the man whom Lettice thought had been drinking too much wine.

"Well," said Jameson, almost as though the girl had asked him a question, "what has frightened you?"

"I don't know," impelled to confidence by the strange softening of his manner; "everything, I think."

He came a little nearer and sat down.

"Have you been here long—I don't mean in Paris, but with these people?"

"A fortnight yesterday. I am Miss Peyton's companion."

"Then you are no relation of theirs?"

"Oh, no."

"Good Heavens! what could your parents have been about to let you fall into the hands of such a couple! Didn't they make any inquiries?"

"My parents are dead."

"Ah! Well, I don't often trouble people with advice; but I'll give you one piece: Get away from here as soon as possible! Don't you know the true character of this place? It's a gambling hell! and that old villain, Peyton, has ruined more young fellows than any other man in Paris!"

"I am sure you mean to be kind," said the girl, simply; "but—you don't understand."

"I understand you have put yourself into the power of a couple of adventurers. Why, a decent girl had better starve at plain needlework than stay with the Peytons!"

Not long after, Algy Vere and his mentor departed; the other man and Captain Peyton were still playing *carté*. Dora said they would make a night of it very likely, but she was sleepy and wanted to go to bed. Lettice was only too glad to jump at the chance of escape. But solitude was not to be granted her yet. Dora would come into her room and talk over the evening. The companion listened as in a dream. She gathered that Mr. Dale (the man still playing cards) was rich and utterly reckless of money. Algy Vere was richer still, but the third man, his cousin, Allick Jameson, was comparatively poor.

"Lord and Lady Vere put such faith in him they sent him abroad to look after their own lamb, but Algy says he won't be dictated to by any straight-laced Scotchman. He really is very

nice, Miss Brown, and paid me one or two compliments."

"He was not sober," said Lettice. "It would have been a truer compliment to you not to have come here in such a condition."

"Oh, you are too particular. He lost over twenty pounds. Really, I think dad might spare me enough for a new dress as well as a few shillings for gloves," and then, with a yawn, she departed.

Lettice lay awake till the small hours of the morning. She heard Mr. Dale depart about four, and shuddered as she thought of all Allick Jameson had told her. If he was right she must leave the Peytons at once. She had most of her money still left, and no doubt she could take rooms in Paris till she heard of another engagement. It was not like being penniless. Over thirty pounds made a nice little capital.

She did not keep much in her purse. She had never forgotten her experience at Fulham with the dressmaker. She found, too, that Dora had quite a talent for borrowing small sums without thinking of their return, so thirty-five pounds, representing the bulk of Lettice's capital, was kept locked in her box, the key of which never left her own possession. To-night she could not sleep, she was too uneasy. She made a hundred plans, only to dismiss them as impracticable. At last it occurred to her that Mr. Jameson might have been prejudiced, in which case she was doing the Peytons a grievous injustice. She would wait one week longer before taking any steps to leave them, then, if she was still uneasy about their character, she would tell the Captain she found the situation so different from her expectations that she would like to give it up at the end of the first month.

The girls breakfasted alone the next morning. The Captain was still in bed. Dora was radiant with spirits and health. Lettice looked ill and jaded. Miss Peyton rallied her on her pallor.

"You really can't have lost your heart to Mr. Jameson (you didn't speak a word to the others), so what makes you so quiet and silent? We'll go out directly after breakfast. Papa has given me a hundred francs and I am longing to spend it. I want so many things the difficulty is what to choose."

Lettice had no choice but to accompany Miss Peyton. She had been engaged as her companion, and, of course, to go shopping with her was part of her duty; but, oh, how the girl hated the expedition. Lettice Dene knew very little of society etiquette (Mrs. Seaton would have said she offended against it herself dreadfully), but she had an innate refinement of her own which stood her in good stead. She felt, rather than knew, that Dora's manners in public were fast and second-rate. She could not always follow the fluent French in which Miss Peyton addressed the shop assistants, but she knew that the men treated her with a kind of free-and-easy familiarity they did not show to their other customers. Indeed, Lettice soon saw that she and Dora seemed the only girls who went alone to the gay shops on the Boulevards. The French *demoiselles* were always under the wing of their mother or an elderly servant, while even the English girl-residents seemed to perform their shopping only when accompanied by an older friend. Dora Peyton finally decided that an evening dress, a new bonnet, and some gloves would be the best investment for her hundred francs. The time she took to choose them seemed endless to Lettice, but at last the selection was made and the companion suggested they should return home.

"Presently. I want to go down the Boulevard Eugène first. Mr. Vere is stopping at an hotel there. If we met him he might invite us to breakfast somewhere."

"But we couldn't go," objected Lettice, "and, oh, Dora, don't you see, if he saw us in that particular road he would think we were trying to meet him."

"He wouldn't think far wrong," said Dora. "Miss Brown, it is of no use your talking. I am going down the Boulevard Eugène."

Lettice hoped with all her heart Dora would be disappointed; but no, at the corner of the street they came face to face with Algy Vere and

Mr. Jameson. The two men lifted their hats and would have passed on, but Dora came to an abrupt stop, and without positive rudeness they had no choice but to stay and listen to her rather loud conversation.

Jameson looked at Miss Brown searchingly, as though to inquire if she had forgotten his warning, but he did not speak. Lettice longed to tell him their presence here this morning was not her work; but it was impossible to defend herself without accusing Dora, so she was perforce silent. She and Jameson would have formed a good subject for a satirical artist; their displeasure and annoyance were so evident, and yet they perforce remained motionless, detained against their will by the other two. Lettice tried in vain to escape the scrutiny of Jameson's dark eyes, when suddenly something made her almost forget his very existence. On the opposite side of the street she saw two ladies looking into a shop window. She could not be mistaken. One of them was her maid, Mary White! The other—why, surely it was the lady who had travelled with her on the day she first came to Ashcroft!

And Mary was the younger of the two passengers, the one who had uttered that mysterious warning; that was why the maid's face had struck her as familiar. The plainly-made dresses, the total absence of frills, above all, the white cap and apron had prevented her from recognizing Mary while in her service. She knew the truth now.

Bit by bit things that had puzzled Lettice grew clear to her. No wonder the anonymous letter reached Ashcroft without any one seeing it arrive. It was the work of the supposed maid; not content with her spoken warning, or perhaps thinking it ineffectual, she had attempted another stab in the dark.

Of course, the story of her mother's illness was false, merely an excuse to effect her escape. Probably she had tired of the rôle she had undertaken. Then Lettice started. Why should a fashionable young lady disguise herself as a servant? What sinister object could she have in coming to Ashcroft? Even if she were the "enemy" to whom Jack North had alluded, she could have found means to slander him without suffering the indignities of domestic service. The North diamonds had disappeared the last night Mary had slept at Ashcroft—she had taken them.

Lettice felt as certain of it as though she had seen the jewels in Mary's possession; she could not grasp the details of the scheme. No doubt Mary White had played the ghost so as to direct suspicion from herself; but how she obtained the key of the jewel safe, how she left her own room without exciting the suspicion of the servants, who slept near her, it was impossible to say.

All this rushed through Lettice's brain in the space of a few seconds. Then but one thought possessed her. She would speak to Mary and accuse her of the theft. The diamonds were John's now, and Lettice would save them for his wife. With one dart she exited girl rushed across the road without looking at the stream of approaching vehicles. Blanche Morris and her mother walked on their way in utter unconcern. They had not even noticed the mad rush, or recognised Lettice. Allick Jameson called out a warning too late. A *fiacre* had knocked down the poor little companion, and she was lying a forlorn little black heap in the road.

The traffic stopped abruptly, and Mr. Jameson, who had rushed to the rescue, dragged Lettice literally from under the horse's hoofs, wondering the while, in his cynical way, if the accident were a genuine one, or been incurred for the sake of creating a sensation.

Miss Peyton wrung her hands theatrically, and asked what was to be done. She showed neither pity nor interest in the poor little creature. Her idea seemed to be that Miss Brown was most inconsiderate to get run over.

"Done!" said Jameson, coldly, "only take her home, put her to bed and send for the doctor. Can't you see the poor girl's unconscious?"

But Miss Peyton was far too prudent to risk

bringing on her father the expenses of Lettice's illness.

"It would never do to take her home, our flat is so small and inconvenient; besides, I know nothing of nursing."

"You could get a Sister of Charity," suggested Algy Vere, who had a very kind heart in spite of certain little weaknesses.

Miss Peyton took a very lofty tone.

"But think of the expense. I am sure my father would say we were not justified in incurring it. Miss Brown has no claim on us. She has only been with us about three weeks."

"She must go to a hospital," said Jameson, shortly. "I'll drive there with her. No, Miss Peyton, you need not accompany us. I am sure your father would say you were not justified in incurring the fatigue."

With the assistance of a *gendarme* poor little Lettice was lifted into a *fiacre*. Jameson seated himself beside her; but Dora was not prepared to see Algy Vere take the opposite place. She felt a little annoyed with herself as the vehicle drove off.

"What did I tell you!" Jameson asked his friend. "That girl is nothing but a heartless adventuress. She makes up to you for your money. She's no feeling in her. Why, couldn't you see all she feared was having the expense of Miss Brown's illness?"

"How did the girl come to rush across the road in that mad fashion?"

"I haven't an idea. She seemed suddenly to recognise someone, and to go in pursuit."

"Where are you taking her?"

Jameson gave the name of the hospital, a small one devoted chiefly to the reception of accidents. "I know one of the doctors; he's a very decent fellow for a Frenchman."

"I say," said Algy, in rather an alarmed tone, "they won't think we have knocked her down or anything, will they?"

"I don't think there is any fear," said Jameson actually smiling.

He explained things very simply to the Sister of Charity who received them. The young lady was a compatriot of his own—a Miss Brown. She was run over while attempting to cross the road, and knowing there was no facility for her being nursed at the place where she was living, he had brought her to the hospital.

"But surely she has friends here!" said the Sister. "A girl so young would not be alone in Paris."

"She was a companion—a *dame de compagnie*—but her employers have not much pity and would not dream of nursing her. I shall be happy to defray any charge there may be made for her stay here."

He really knew nothing of the regulations of French hospitals and put in the last clause lest his poor *protégée* should be refused admission on the ground that she was a foreigner.

He was asked her name and parentage. He could only reply that she was introduced to him as Miss Brown, and he believed she was an orphan. He had never heard where she had lived in England; indeed, he had only seen her once before to-day. He gave the name and address of her employer, and then was allowed to leave, resolving in his own mind to see the doctor of whom he had spoken to Algy and hear his opinion of the case.

"I think I shall drop the Peytons," said Algy, rather absently, as they walked back towards their hotel.

"It would be the best day's work you ever did, old fellow. They are birds of prey and nothing else."

"Oh, I like people a little out of the common," answered Algy, "and I thought they were very jolly."

"What has changed your opinion?"

"The way Miss Peyton shunted that poor girl. It was as clear as possible she had no feeling for people who could not be of use to her. If I hadn't lost my money pretty freely to the Captain last night his daughter would not have been so amiable."

"Mark my words, Vere, the old fellow won't let you go easily. He thinks he's got you into

his clutches, and that you'll do nicely for his son-in-law."

Algy laughed.

"I shouldn't wonder. Well, old boy, I'm not very good at saying 'No.' I don't think I'll put myself in the way of the gallant officer just yet. I have half an idea I'll cross to England to-night. The mater's letters got more and more doleful, and I rather fancy I've been making a fool of myself."

Jameson was kind enough not to endorse the last sentiment. He had the satisfaction of seeing his friend off by the mail train for Calais, and then he "looked up" his medical acquaintance and demanded how it fared with Miss Brown.

"No bones broken, general shock to the system, and brain fever coming on."

"Brain fever from being run over?"

"No. The accident is not all that's amiss. That girl has been living under some terrible mental strain. It's a wonder she hasn't broken down before."

"And you think things will go badly with her—that she will die?"

The French doctor was a bit of a philosopher, and he half smiled.

"On the contrary, I believe she will live. I generally notice that death seizes those who have most to make them prize life, the others he rejects. If your Miss Brown were the idolized child of rich parents, if she had a devoted lover tearing his hair in anxiety about her, the chances are she would die, but as it seems to me that no one in particular wants her, and that she has nothing to look forward to but work, I think she will recover."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Sir John North reached Ashcroft he was feeling cross, miserable and anxious. First and foremost he was thoroughly tired, and would far rather have spent a quiet evening at home than have had to rush off to obey his aunt's summons.

Then he felt distinctly to blame. He had had a suspicion—and more than a suspicion—for some time that Lettice was unhappy at the Croft, that Mrs. Seaton oppressed her, and instead of trying to set things right he had let them drift on. Then he had an almost reverential affection for the beautiful old homestead, and he hated to think of some low adventurer as it's master, for Lettice's flight, joined to Mr. Carleton's story of the fifty pounds, made him feel positive she had eloped; lastly, he had felt a stronger interest in her than he had realised. He found now that it hurt him to feel she had disappointed him, and that if it was painful to think of Ashcroft in unworthy hands, it was far more so to picture Lettice at the mercy of some miserable scoundrel who had married her for her money.

Sir John was in that frame of mind when everything jarred on him, and the best-meant speech would have irritated him; but Mrs. Seaton could hardly have chosen a greeting more likely to annoy him than this,—

"I always said Lettice's Dene would disgrace us all, Jack. What is to be done?"

They were in the drawing-room, Mrs. Seaton and Julia in full evening dress, the room bright with fire and lamplight. There were no flowers lavishly about. On every side were marks of luxury and wealth.

It occurred to Jack that Lettice's money had paid for all, and that Mrs. Seaton owed all her comforts to the girl she so condemned; perhaps this added an extra bitterness to his reply.

"I am not aware that my cousin," a slight stress on the possessive pronoun, "has disgraced me. You and Julia being no relations of hers are of course not affected by her conduct. And I think it would be in better taste not to abuse her in her own house whilst you are enjoying her hospitality."

Mrs. Seaton looked dumbfounded. She had always regarded Jack as her kinsman, not Lettice's. Julia, with a vague fear they were on the point of a quarrel, flung herself into the breach.

"Jack, do try to help us. Lettice went into Ashleigh with mamma this afternoon; they parted at the Town Hall. Lettice was to have spent the

afternoon at Mrs. Hunt's, but she never arrived there, and someone told Grimes (the coachman) that she went to London by the three-forty train."

Sir John pulled himself together; he had never been Julia's lover, but he had always cared for her as a sister, and he never spoke a harsh word to her.

"I think the truth is plain, Jill: she was miserably unhappy here, and she has gone to London hoping to find more kindness than was her portion at the Croft."

Julia looked bewildered.

"But, Jack, she had no friends in London except the Carletons."

"She did not go to them. I dined there last night."

"And I am sure she would not go to Mrs. Thurston."

But here Mrs. Seaton, who had been momentarily crushed by Sir John's rebuke, found her voice.

"Of course she has not gone to her aunt's; she has eloped with some miserable city man she met at Mrs. Thurston's. A pretty thing it will be for me to see a creature of that sort master here!"

"Mother!" cried Julia, passionately, "you wrong her, you do indeed. I am positive Lettice would never marry anyone unworthy."

"Were you in her confidence?" asked Sir John, coldly. "You were kind to her—at first."

Julia winced. She knew the reproach implied in the last two words was just.

"I am not in her confidence; but the only person Lettice cared for—I mean that I thought she cared for—is in Ashleigh, so she would not have gone to London if I had been right. Perhaps I was mistaken."

"Who did you think she cared for?"

Julia hesitated.

"You had better answer, my dear," observed her mother. "Nothing you can say about that wretched girl will surprise me."

Julia blushed crimson. She turned to Jack.

"She never said a word, but I always thought she cared for Denis Fane, and I am certain he is in love with her."

"You are utterly mistaken, Jill," replied her cousin. "Fane himself told me his father had cautioned him 'not to fall in love with the heiress'; and, he added, the warning was needless, since before ever he saw Lettice Dene he was in love with someone else. As for Lettice," and Sir John's voice grew grave, "I do not believe she is the sort of girl to give her love unsought. She was grateful to Denis for past kindness; and the very fact of having known him in London made her seem more at ease with him than anyone else she met here."

A pause.

"She has taken nothing with her," observed Mrs. Seaton; "not even a hand-bag. Do you think she has committed suicide?"

"Heaven forbid!" said the two listeners with one breath.

"I do not see why you should say that," retorted Mrs. Seaton. "It seems to me that Lettice Dene's death would set everything right; and the wrong my poor father did would be undone."

Sir John lost his temper for the second time in one half-hour; but it must be confessed he was sorely tried.

"I declare to you solemnly that my uncle did no wrong," he assured Mrs. Seaton. "I am perfectly satisfied that his grandchild's claim on Ashleigh is better than mine; and I hope, with all my heart, that in spite of your cruel remark, that her death would set everything right, to see my cousin again alive and well ruling here!"

"Still, if she is dead," persisted Aunt Seaton, "you would be master of Ashcroft."

"I doubt it."

"John! Surely you would not be so quixotic as to give it up to a charity?"

"I decline to discuss what I should do; but I don't believe the property would be mine. I am no lawyer, and I cannot say if my opinion is correct, but I believe that if my cousin, Lettice Dene, died before her next birthday, or, indeed,

at any time unmarried, without a will, her cousin, the Thurstons, would be her natural heirs."

"What! The Thurstons claim Ashcroft! Never!"

"There is no entail," said Jack. "If her property went to her next-of-kin, I take it that her father's nephews and nieces would have as much claim to it as her mother's first cousin."

Mrs. Seaton flung herself on the sofa and sobbed aloud.

"I never thought of that. Oh, Jack! why didn't you tell me! I should have acted so differently!"

"Mother," cried poor Julia, sorely troubled, "don't talk so wildly! You can't think what your words imply."

Jack had grown white as death.

"Surely you don't mean that—"

Mrs. Seaton laughed hysterically.

"I didn't murder Lettice, or make away with her, if that's what you mean! but I let her feel I thought she had robbed you of your own. And once, when she told me she should give the Crofts back to you as soon as she was twenty-one, and that if she died first she would write out her wishes, I said there would be no need for that. If she died before her next birthday, you were her heir-at-law."

"You told her that!"

"Certainly!"

"It was as good as saying you wanted her out of the way!" growled Jack.

"Mother! how could you!" exclaimed poor Julia.

"Before you say impertinent things to me it would be as well to think what is to be done," said Mrs. Seaton, coldly. "I suppose, John, you intend to take some steps to trace this unfortunate girl! You had better telegraph for Mr. Carleton."

"I can't. We have telegraphed to him so often. I will go up to London by the first train in the morning and tell him everything."

But Sir John so far modified this plan as to wait till the post was in before starting. He had a vague presentiment Lettice would write either to him or Mrs. Seaton. When he got the letter she had written at the Temperance Hotel his very heart ached, and his feelings towards his Aunt Susan were more aggrieved than ever.

She had played such a mean, paltry part. She had literally hounded the orphan girl out into the world, believing hereby to secure the prosperity of her own daughter, and all the while she and Julia were living at Lettice's expense. In one particular the letter relieved his mind: there was no lover in the case. Lettice Dene seemed to have no thought of love or marriage; she had simply gone away because it had been impressed on her life stood between two other people and happiness. Too conscientious to seek death she had accepted a life-long exile from the home lawfully her own.

Sir John went to Mr. Carleton's private house, hoping to catch him before he started for the office. He had another reason for calling in Kensington rather than the Temple: he had a great liking for the solicitor's wife, and he believed her kindly heart and womanly instincts might be of more help in his perplexity than even her husband's legal skill. Mr. Carleton was at home, and one glance at Jack's face told him he brought bad news. At the visitor's request the lawyer brought his wife to join in the consultation, then John North told his story and showed them Lettice's letter.

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Carleton, the tears in her own eyes. "It reads as though her heart was broken. Last June I should have said a little money would make her perfectly happy, and yet, ever since she became an heiress she seems to have been wretched."

"I can't make out the fifty pounds," said Mr. Carleton. "Did she think it would keep her any time?"

"Perhaps she meant to be trained for some special work," suggested his wife; "typewriting or shorthand—to learn either, needs a premium."

"She took nothing with her," said Sir John. "She may have felt she could only effect her

escape untroubled by luggage, and have wanted the money for clothes."

"We must advertise," said the lawyer, shrewdly, "in the agony column of all the daily papers. Girls always read that column."

"You don't think she can have gone to friends?"

"She had no friends except us," objected Mr. Carleton, "and she would know you might seek her here. No, Sir John, I incline to my wife's theory. She has taken cheap rooms somewhere in London, and is going to study typewriting; it is quicker learned than almost any other remunerative art, and provided the fees were paid in advance she would need no reference."

Alone in London, friendless and poor, cut off from all those who had known her before, because for his sake and Julia's she wished to be dead to them, Jack North thought it was a sorry prospect for his poor little cousin.

He spent the whole of that day in London. He cross-questioned the porters at King's Cross who had been on the platform when Lettice's train arrived. He tried to find a cab that had driven her, but all in vain. He had to confess he had failed all down the line.

He wrote out two advertisements which he thought would secure her return, but he worded them too vaguely. Lettice read both, and put them down to his scruples at seeming to benefit by her sacrifice. She never understood it was real genuine anxiety about herself which prompted them.

"Lettice. Return at once. You are quite mistaken. All will be well if you go home."

"L. D. is earnestly entreated to communicate with her cousin J. N. He much regrets her course, which was quite needless."

The natural reserve of an Englishman prevented Jack from letting his heart appear in a newspaper advertisement. If he had simply expressed his own feelings the notice in the papers would have been something after this—

"You poor little thing, Lettice. We've all been hard on you, but you went off under a big delusion. I am not engaged to Julia, and never should be if you did not exist. So come back and let us try to make up to you for the past."

But such an appeal could hardly appear in a public paper—or Jack thought not—so he fell back upon his previous attempts, quite forgetting that there was nothing in either to show Lettice her relatives wanted her, but that both implied merely that they would not let her sacrifice herself on their account—a very different thing.

(To be continued.)

A BOOK OF REFERENCE.—A very handy book of reference has reached us in the shape of Holloway's Almanac and Family Friend for 1898. Although published gratuitously—Mr. Holloway, of 78, New Oxford-street, offering to send it to any address in the world on receipt of a halfpenny stamp for postage—it is well printed, on good paper, with a really fine illustration on nearly every page. The little book contains much varied information, which makes it a valuable home reference book, and in addition it has a most interesting series of illustrated articles on the Sports of the World.

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY EMPEROR KING MENELIK II. has ordered a throne for himself, which has been made in France. The height of this magnificent structure is nearly twenty feet, and the breadth is four yards. Carried out in the Romano-Byzantine style, it has two carved and gilt oak supports, topped by what is technically called an entablature, upon which rests a massive metal crown. There are splendidly embroidered draperies, also adorned with a crown, and the base has two further crowns carved upon it, the one Imperial, the other regal, with the Emperor-King Menelik's monogram underneath them in Ethiopian characters.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

OLD ROSSITER'S DAUGHTER.

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(Continued from page 224.)

Thus things are when Gipsy Rossiter inherits a small fortune from her maiden godmother; and insists that she and her father shall dissipate some of it by spending a few weeks in town.

Ted has taken a house and offices in the neighbouring town; Alf is away, bound for Barbadoes, and Frank at London; so they let the house, and taking lodgings in the vicinity of St. James's Park, prepare for a round of gaiety.

An old friend of Mr. Rossiter's, named Mrs. Trelawney, undertakes the charge of Gipsy, and, not knowing her love-story, prophesies a brilliant match for her. The girl only smiles, and whispers to her heart that now she shall see Hugh, and all the pain and anguish of the past eighteen months will be forgotten.

At the first ball she attends she meets Annabel and Miss Tabitha Brown; and whilst sitting in an alcove the latter lady, who has begged an introduction of her hostess, is brought to her.

Small and spare, with hair and complexion of the same drab hue, light eyes and thin lips, she makes a very poor impression upon Gipsy; but she tolerates her, because she hopes to hear something of Hugh.

Miss Brown skilfully leads the conversation up to him; she has been well-drilled by Mr. Stamer, and knows her part to perfection. She contrives to connect Hugh's and Annabel's names in a way that rouses a dim suspicion and vague pain in Gipsy's heart, and having done this she takes her leave affectionately, expressing a hope that they shall meet again.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER this Gipsy often meets Miss Tabitha and Annabel at the houses of mutual acquaintances, and the former contrives always to keep the girls apart. Her task is rendered far easier by the arrival of Harry March, who at once attaches himself to Gipsy.

The girl, unsuspicious, and well pleased to see a familiar face among so many strange ones, welcomes him cordially, and continues to treat him with the old frankness. He seems to her a bit of the past, when she and Hugh had been so happy in their mutual love. She never thinks what construction the malicious ones will place upon their friendship, and unwittingly helps to work out her doom.

When Miss Tabitha speaks of the young man she answers readily, and in terms of highest, most unqualified praise; tells her, too, that he is his uncle's (Sir Geoffrey March's) heir, and will one day be a very wealthy man. And the soured spinster listens, resolving to make good use of the information, having an eye to the reward Jacob Stamer has promised if she succeeds in separating his son and Rossiter's daughter.

One evening she persuades Hugh to accompany them to the Lyceum, having ascertained that the Rossiters and Harry will be present. Once seated, her eyes rove round the house, and presently discover her victim.

"Mr. Stamer," she says, smiling and displaying the gold wire in her teeth very liberally, "do you see Miss Rossiter, your old flame? That is Mr. March with her, and folks say it is to be a match between them."

Hugh looks annoyed, but following the direction of her eyes, meets those of Gipsy, very bright and eager. She bows to him and he longs to go to her, but their intercourse is limited to a mere sign of recognition; and he has to endure all the pangs of jealousy as he watches Harry bending over her, paying her little delicate attentions, chatting gaily to her between the acts. To-night for the first time, a doubt of her truth stirs in his heart.

And so it is from day to day that the leaven of Miss Tabitha's malice works in the brains of these two ill-fated lovers. Hugh grows bitter, and Gipsy reckless. When he is present she flirts outrageously, and meets his frown with defiant face.

Men remark amongst themselves that "that Roaster girl is developing into a most audacious coquette," and some add, "It is a pity she is losing her pretty, half-rustic air."

She grows paler and thinner, too, and her laughter has a forced, unreal sound in it. Furtively she watches Hugh and Annabel, and with a woman's quick intuition sees the girl loves her cousin; sees, too, his invariable kindness to her, and begins to believe Miss Tabitha's hints concerning an engagement between them.

One day, in her desperate pain, she determined to learn the worst, and finding Miss Tabitha especially talkative, piles her with questions, and, at last asks, with a superb assumption of indifference,—

"Is there any truth in the report that an arrangement has been made between Mr. Stamer and Miss Frost?"

The cat-like eyes watching her see no change in her face, no spasm of pain contract her lips, and Miss Tabitha wonders if she has forgotten. Then she answers boldly,—

"Oh, yes; they are to be married at the close of the season. I think the match a very suitable one, do not you, Miss Roaster?"

"Certainly." In a harsh voice, but she screens her face behind her fan. "Miss Frost is very pretty, rich, and you say amiable."

"She is all that," with emphasis. "I suppose I am to congratulate you upon your engagement with Mr. March?"

"Oh, nothing is settled yet," Gipsy answers coolly. All her pride in arms; but from her tone Miss Tabitha infers that her guess is nearer the truth than she had dared so hope.

No need any longer for *finess*; Hugh will probably marry Annabel from pique, and her reward is sure.

She moves to another part of the room, and for awhile Gipsy sits motionless behind the ferns and hydrangeas, listening to the trickling of the fountains, the haunting strains of "Our Last Waltz," and through all her heart sends up a cry of "False!—false!—false!"

Then the hostess seeks her out, and to Gipsy's horror Hugh is with her.

"Miss Roaster, there is a scarcity of ladies, so I cannot allow you to sit out. Mr. Stamer, Miss Roaster," and so leaves them.

Oh! now, if they will but speak out, all may be well. Hugh takes the small, extended hand, and does not retain it in his. His face is dark and his eyes brooding.

"May I have this dance? It is a very impromptu request, but—"

He pauses, and Gipsy answers, with white but steady lips,—

"I should like it."

And in a moment they are whirling round the room, whilst the music beats into her heart and brain and maddens her. She can remember only the words of that old song:—

"Oh, love, for the last time whisper low:
Say you love me, darling, once before I go!
Only to-night, only to-night, hark to the old refrain,
Only to-night, just for to-night, but never for me again."

She is going mad. Oh, Heaven! how can she bear it! His arm about her, his breath upon her uplifted face, his heart beating upon hers and his love dead. Suddenly she stops.

"Take me to a seat," she pants. "I am ill."

Without a word he leads her from the whirling throng. Oh, now is the time to explain away all that appears so evil.

"Surely, surely," he thinks, "she will tell me all. I may be needlessly jealous."

But the watchful eyes of Miss Tabitha have spied them out, and she hastens to proffer her assistance.

"Go away, Mr. Stamer," she says, pleadingly. "Miss Roaster is best with me."

"Reluctantly he goes, and so the chance is lost, never to return again. When he has gone Gipsy looks round in a scared way.

"Will you find Mrs. Trelawney for me?" she asks; but Miss Tabitha has no intention of leaving her again.

"My dear, I do not like to go yet; you are so far from well. Oh, Mr. March"—signalling to

Harry, who joins them rapidly—will you bring Mrs. Trelawney. Miss Roaster is ill."

Mrs. Trelawney hastens at once to her young friend.

"My dear, I am so grieved."

But the girl rises hurriedly, and stretches out her hands in a hapless way.

"Take me away," she wails, "oh, take me from this dreadful place," and suffers Harry to lead her from the room.

But the next day she fulfils all her engagements, only it is noticed that she is pale and absent-minded; looks the very ghost of the girl who had come to town a few weeks since so rich in beauty, happiness, and love.

Mrs. Trelawney and her father grow anxious as the days lengthen into weeks, and she grows paler and more fragile, inclined, too, to fitful bursts of merriment, usually followed by hysterical weeping.

But when they urge her to return home she shakes her head, and steadfastly refuses. To herself she says she must look upon her lover to the last, although seeing him gives her added pain, lacerates her heart anew.

She flirts desperately, too, as if she seeks forgetfulness thus, or, perhaps, from a fierce desire to make others suffer even as she does.

One day Harry March finds her alone, and taking her hot, thin hand in his, says,—

"Gipsy, my dear, I have been waiting for this opportunity a long time. Will you answer me one question frankly and without reservation? Is there anything between you and Stamer now?"

Her large, dark eyes meet his profoundly.

"Nothing," she says, and shivers a little.

"He is going to marry his cousin, Miss Frost."

"Then I may hope?" eagerly. "Sweetheart, you know I have loved you all along, but I have feared to speak until now. Will you try to think of me as something nearer and dearer than a friend? Will you give me the right to love and protect you always?"

She hardly feels any pity for him; her heart is so sore with her own pain. She only answers languidly that she shall never marry, and he must try to forget her; and seeing she is scarcely in a fit mood to be reasoned with he desists.

After this day she grows perceptibly weaker, and can no longer keep her engagements. Greatly alarmed Mr. Roaster calls in a physician, who looks grave, and shakes his head over her; then orders her back to Stokefield at once.

Frank has left town more than a month now, having taken a responsible post in a branch establishment of his firm at Constantinople, so there is no one to mediate between herself and Hugh; and, after all, she thinks "of what avail would mediation be, seeing his heart has gone from me?"

So on the eve of her departure she writes him a little note, which seals her doom and his, and confirms his belief in her faithlessness.

"Miss Roaster has great pleasure in giving Mr. Stamer his freedom, feeling sure such a course must result in happiness to both."

A long airy room, with crimson and white hangings, and on a bed, painfully thin, with a bright spot on either cheek, lies Gipsy—pretty Gipsy Roaster—dying. By her side sits her father; at the foot of the bed is Ted, his face hidden in his hands. She stirs slightly.

"Daddy, if you had never parted us—oh, my dear! my dear! I don't grieve so; but—but if you had been less harsh to him—I might have been strong and happy now."

She does not mean to reproach him, but the long pent-up anguish of her soul will at last have vent.

"Oh!" she wails, "I loved him, I loved him so dearly, and it broke my heart to lose him."

She laughs then in a dreadful way.

"You see I lived by his love and when that was taken from me I knew I should die. Oh! oh! sweetheart, love! how cruel you have been!"

"Hush! hush, my dearest!" Ted cries, starting forward and kneeling by her. "You break our hearts. Tell me, Gipsy, what can I do for you? Is there anything you wish?"

"Yes," slowly, "I should like to see Frank and Alf, but that cannot be, and—and—oh, father! Ted! I cannot die without a word of good-bye to Hugh. When he knows I am dying he will come to me. He will be sorry for me, and she will not grudge me one hour's happiness."

When Hugh received Gipsy's note his doubts of her truth were confirmed, and his pride rose in passionate revolt against his love, because he believed he had been so wantonly duped.

In a moment of pique he went to Annabel. She, at least, loved him, and had proved her love in a hundred ways.

"My dear," he said, and his voice was hoarse with pain, "the woman I loved is false to me. I do not pretend that I shall ever love you so well as I did her, but I will be a true and kind husband if you will accept me," and Annabel had kissed him, and been almost content.

So on the day Ted arrives at Hugh's chambers he finds them empty, and the landlady informs him Mr. Stamer has gone away to be married, and gives him the senior Stamer's address.

Full of anger Ted hastens to the villa, and forces his way in. He catches a glimpse of the dainty-robed figures of pretty bridesmaids, hears the ripple of light laughter; then he is shown into a room, and bidden to wait for Hugh.

Presently the door is opened, and the bridegroom enters dressed for the ceremony. He starts back, seeing Ted, then coldly inquires what brings him here.

"Gipsy is dying," Ted says, bluntly, "and you have murdered her; but she prays you to come to her that she may say good-bye."

Hugh staggers against the wall.

"Dying! and I her murderer! I don't understand!" passing his hand over his temples in a dazed way.

"It is this marriage of yours that has worked us so much misery! Was she not pretty and good enough to retain your love? Truly the Danesworth blood has shown in you as my father said it would. But there is no time to bandy words. Will you come?"

"I will come," speaking like one in a dream.

Then he goes away to tell Annabel there will be no wedding this day. Aye, and no wedding for him in any day to come.

Gipsy is sinking fast; but when the young man enters she is quite conscious, and greets Hugh with a bright smile.

"I knew you would come," she says, brokenly, "although they said you would not. I could not die alone. Oh, love—love! it has been so hard; but it is all over now. Yet, oh! if you could have been true to me to the end!"

A terrible sob breaks from him, and in half articulate words he tells all his unswerving love—and when he finishes her face is bright as that of an angel.

"Sit by me," she says. "Hold me—my head upon your breast—I would wish to die in your arms."

"Gipsy," entreats Mr. Roaster, "forgive me, say you forgive me, child!"

"I did that long ago; and now—now I am very happy. All of you kiss me, but Hugh last of all."

They bend over her and kiss her once, knowing now the parting is near at hand. Then Hugh lays his lips to hers, that have grown so cold, and even as he does so her head falls back upon her shoulder, and in one horrible flash he knows that she is dead.

He lays her amongst the pillows, not so white now as her sweet, still face, and falling on his knees by the bed hides his face in the bed-clothes.

He hears the sobs of Mr. Roaster and Ted, but he scarcely hears them. He only knows that he has lost her for ever and for ever. He stretches out his hand, and clasps one of hers in his. Alas! to think it can never now return his pressure!

"Never again will that dear head ache,
Never again will that true heart break,
Never again will those sad eyes wake
From that calm sleep."

And the darkness of despair gathers all around and about him.

In after days Annabel marries Harry March, but Hugh lives alone; and although folks wonder why he does not take a wife none guess his love story or its tragic ending, or that he and the girl who was so dear to him suffered so cruelly for a sin that was not their own.

[THE END.]

THE SECRET OF THE MINE.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE beautiful girl who was talking to Captain Burton clinched her white hands together, and a look of hatred swept over her face.

"I have no love for Bertie Howard," she answered in a low voice; "he jilted me, and you know the words—"

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, Nor hate so pitiless as love to hatred turned."

"I told him then that the hour would come when he would rue it; but he only laughed at me, calling my love for him a mad infatuation, adding insults to injury by declaring that on his part it was no love affair between him and me—only a simple and harmless little flirtation."

"Well," said Captain Burton, cutting her remarks short, "you had better go back to the gate; that maid will be there by this time to tell you whether she delivered your last message to him, and if he will come. Don't let her suspect that I have anything to do with the matter, or she will betray us to Howard; she's not to be trusted."

"Those are the words that made me furious. For one moment I stood there after they had parted from each other, with the faintness of death stealing over me. He, of all other men on earth, to speak thus lightly of the poor fool who had been his dupe, and who, even then, was grieving her life out because of her disappointed love for him! Then another thought occurred to me. I had delivered the girl's message to Mr. Bertie Howard the night before, and he had replied angrily:

"Did you not tell her that I would never see her again? But hold! I will go. I will see her myself to-morrow morning at the hour she names, and will put a stop for all time to come to this sort of thing."

"I had slipped down in advance of him to the wicket-gate to tell her he was coming, when I overheard her conversation with Captain Burton. Ah! what if Mr. Howard had gone to the wicket-gate by way of the lane? The very thought almost paralyzed me. I hurried back to the house to tell him all. I—I—went to his room; the door was ajar. Oh, my lady, he has gone on blindly to his fate, and does not know it—gone like a lamb to the slaughter! What shall we do, my lady? Whatever is done must be done quickly. He has gone to the wicket-gate, and instead of the girl he is expecting to see, and to reprimand for coming to see him, Captain Burton will be there, and he will be killed!"

A bitter cry fell from Norah's lips. She forgot the girl she had slipped into her bosom—forgot everything save the peril of the man she loved.

"Come," she said, grasping the maid's arm, "let no time be lost; every moment is precious. Lead the way."

Fear lent wings to her feet. The maid was trembling so that she could hardly walk a step.

"For the love of heaven, hasten!" she sobbed. Even as she uttered the words there was the report of a pistol.

"Oh, Heaven! we are too late!" cried Norah, in an agony of despair.

Without another word, a moan, or a cry, Norah fell, face downwards, in the long dew-wet grass.

Her maid was too paralyzed for an instant to know what to do, for she thought that the poor,

beautiful, unhappy young lady was dead, she was so white and lifeless.

Back to the house she flew with all speed, and summoned her mistress. Ah, how true it is that one false step leads to another—one falsehood requires the telling of many more falsehoods!

Mrs. Howard went out into the grounds to take an early morning airing," she panted, "and I saw her drop down among the flowers."

In a very short space of time they had carried Norah back to the house and into her room again.

Hastily they summoned the doctor—the same one that had attended her through her late fever.

"I cannot understand it," he mused, gazing long and thoughtfully at his patient, after he had administered the first dose of medicine. "She was on a fair way to recover; indeed, I may say she was almost as strong as she was before her sickness. Some great excitement must have brought this on."

The bank clerk's sister trembled. She said to herself that she must be responsible for Norah's sickness, because of the letter she had put in her hand only the afternoon before.

Her conscience was guilty, and she dared not speak.

The doctor called for Norah's young husband, but was told that he generally walked a mile or so before breakfast, and that he had left the house before this unfortunate occurrence.

He did not return until an hour after the doctor had gone.

He was shocked to hear that Norah was ill again; but no intimation of what had caused it crossed his mind.

The maid dared not tell him. Her relief had been great to see him enter the house, and she could not refrain from saying:

"I heard a pistol-shot, and I was so afraid that some ill had befallen you, sir, knowing that you had gone to meet someone against your will."

"No," he answered, haughtily. "Some hunter was shooting at game, probably. I saw no one. There was no one at the wicket-gate. I continued my walk, and returned home only to find my wife ill," he said, more to himself than to the girl.

His words relieved the maid greatly. Norah's illness was a serious drawback towards informing her brother. He had laid out a plan, and he was not one to shrink from it, no matter what the cost might be.

On the night before he had written a long letter to Norah, telling her of his great love, and beseeching her not to give him up.

"No one else will ever love you as I do," he wrote. "No one can be loved but once in a lifetime as they should be loved. Heaven has so made woman, that to her the chief good in life is love. They cannot dispense with it."

"If you turn away from me now, Norah, the time will come when you will long for the love which you now cast aside. You will be ready to surrender all for love some day, and then you will not find it. You will not be always young and fair."

"The time will come when your hair will have lost its golden sheen and your eyes their light. If sickness comes to you, you will long with all your heart for a tender touch of a loving hand, or the tender words from a loving voice. You will lie, my darling, through long hours of pain thinking of me, longing for me, wondering how you could be so mad as to send me from you, crying out my name; but I will not be near to hear, I will not be near to comfort you."

"Think of the long days you will miss me. I warn you that you cannot live without love, and no one will love you. Only give me a trial, Norah," he wrote, "and let me prove my great love in any way that seems best to you. Will you plead with your brother for me? He will listen to you. Surely he will be merciful to you, where two lives' happiness is concerned. You are my sunshine, the light of my soul. If I were to write a thousand pages I could only tell you, over and over again, that which I have already said—I leave all in your hands, Norah."

He had sealed the letter and laid it on his table, intending to give it to her when he came in, but now she was too ill to read it, he thought, as

he went hastily to his room to get it, and put it safely away until she was better. To his intense surprise, the letter was gone; it was nowhere to be found. He had laid it on the table, he told himself. He was positive of that. Could it be that through absent-mindedness he had slipped it into one of his pockets? The most careful search failed to reveal it. Could it be that he had carried it along in his hands and dropped it? That seemed to be the only solution of the mystery, the only conclusion he could arrive at, for surely no one in the house could have taken it. The maid would not have sufficient interest to pry into his affairs.

Now, the next letter of importance was the one he must write to Norah's brother. He began it with some little trepidation.

He wrote but a few words, saying that the sister whom he was in search of had been married secretly to the writer a few weeks before, and that if he wished to see her he would be gladly welcomed if he would come to the address given in the letter.

Bertie closed and sealed it with a sigh; it was like signing his own death-warrant and sending it forth to the executioner. He knew that two hours or more must elapse before the brother could receive it and answer the summons.

He would spend that time at Norah's bedside, and after that—ah, well! he would not cross the bridge until he came to it, nor worry about it.

At last there was the sound of carriage-wheels dashing up the quiet street. A handsome young man sprang from the carriage, dashed up the walk, and rang the bell violently. Bertie Howard rose to his feet.

"It is her brother!" he told himself, white to the lips. He nerved himself for the ordeal.

A moment later the maid put her head in at the door, saying:

"A gentleman to see you, sir. Please see him as quickly as you can; he seems greatly excited."

"Say that I will see him in a very few moments," replied Bertie, in a voice so hoarse and unnatural, the maid looked at him in wonder.

The door had scarcely closed after her ere the hapless young man threw himself on his knees by Norah's couch, sobbing as few men sob in a lifetime, and the tears were no disgrace to his noble manhood, for they were wrung from the very depths of his anguished soul.

He felt certain of the result—Norah's brother would take her from him. Ah, Heaven! if she were but conscious that her side of the story might be heard. Denis Connor had certainly come at the worst possible time.

Clasping the form of his unconscious bride in his arms, Bertie covered the white face with agonised, passionate kisses. He was growing reckless. He cried that if he were never to see her again he would die by his own hand then and there. That would prove to Norah's brother how madly he loved her, and how wrong it was to separate them.

Bertie's hand travelled to his breast-pocket. His revolver was there. He was in the habit of carrying it there of late, in anticipation of meeting Captain Burton. The revolver was loaded. One slight pressure of the trigger, an instant of intense pain, then all would be over.

Before he could execute his mad resolve, the maid appeared at the door again.

"The gentleman is pacing up and down the parlour like one possessed," she said in a fright. "Will you be down directly, Mr. Howard!" she added, in a tremulous voice.

"Yes," he answered, huskily. "I will see him at once. Ask him if he will be kind enough to step up to this room."

The maid disappeared upon her errand. A moment of anxiety followed, then he heard her returning, a heavier tread following after her.

Bertie Howard drew himself up to his full height, and turned his pale, handsome face toward the door, and calmly awaited the coming of Norah's brother.

CHAPTER L.

THE next link in our story, dear reader, brings us back to Pauline and the thrilling part she was

to play in Bertie Howard's future in the critical hour which was so trying to him.

Pauline had been obliged to return to Mrs. Howard the unsatisfactory report that she had not seen her son Bertie nor his bride.

Mrs. Howard was greatly disappointed.

"I left the letter," said Pauline, "and no doubt you will hear from them some time during the day. If not, I can call there to-morrow morning."

"You are tired with your long trip," said Mrs. Howard. "Take a cup of tea, and after that you can look over the paper for me if you will."

"I will read to you now," said Pauline. "I do not feel the need of anything to eat."

She had scarcely taken the paper in her hands ere a great cry rose to her lips.

"What is the matter?" said Mrs. Howard. "Do, do—see anything about my son?"

"No," said Pauline, hoarsely, her voice sounding strangely hollow. "I am reading of a terrible railway accident. Among the names is one that I have heard before."

"Is it a friend?" asked Mrs. Howard, sympathetically.

"No—yes," answered Pauline, incoherently.

It was well for Pauline, that Mrs. Howard was called from the room just then to attend to the grocery boy who was ringing the basement bell.

Pauline stared at the paper like one carved from stone; her eyes dilated. Again and again she read the printed name, the first one on the list of "killed." She did not cry out. The first thought that flashed across her mind was that she was free—free from the persecutions of the man whom she had married to save her father's honour.

She was sorry for the man's untimely end. But, oh! Heaven pity her! how glad she was to be free! What should she do? She had not a friend in all the great city to advise with—no one to tell her what to do. Then suddenly she thought of Denis Connor. Ah, surely he would tell her what to do; he would help her.

She did not stop to think how such an action would appear to him; but in the first flush of her grief she hurried with all possible speed to a telegraph station at the corner, and sent him a message that she was in London, asking him to come to her at once, as she was in great trouble.

Scarcely an hour passed ere Denis Connor answered the summons, little dreaming of the letter which came to the hotel scarcely five minutes after he had left it.

Pauline knew his step, and her heart beat swiftly. A moment later her old lover was ushered into her presence. She rose to greet him, took a step forward, and once more these two who had been parted so tragically, stood face to face. They looked at each other in silence.

To Denis there came back, with keep, bitter pain, the memory of his passionate farewell. To Pauline, the remembrance of the hour in which she sent him from her, suffering as keenly as he did, yet making no sign.

Denis was the first to speak.

"I think I know why you sent for me," he said, holding out his hand. "I have just read of—of your bereavement. You—you—would like me to advise, perhaps to assist you?"

"Yes," said Pauline in a low voice.

He did not dare touch her hand, the memory of the past was too strong upon him.

He had bidden farewell to those hands, and their least touch was no longer for him. He felt a pain in his heart, and he knew well that the old wound had not yet healed.

Pauline pointed to a seat, and Denis sat down; but he did not take the chair she indicated, taking one further away from her. This action cut Pauline to the very soul.

They talked together for nearly an hour; then, not trusting himself to remain any longer, Denis rose to go. Pauline's very presence, even in this hour, affected him like strong wine.

He had advised her to leave London, where she knew no one, and to return to her Western

home at once. Perhaps there was a method in this.

He realised that if he were to see her often all the old and hopeless love would blossom into life again, for she could be nothing to him. If she had not cared enough for him to have married him in the past, she would never care for him in the future.

Then she asked him about his sister, and he told her the story of her disappearance, and of his fruitless search for her.

"I have business which will take me to America in a fortnight; I will see you there then," he told her. "By the way," he added, "there is an old gentleman and his wife who sail to-morrow; if you think you could get ready so soon, it would be an excellent opportunity for you to go with them."

Pauline's face turned a shade paler. How anxious he was to have her out of England.

"I can go at any time," she answered; "if—"

He seemed to understand her hesitancy and added hastily,—

"There was a bill due on your father's estate, and not knowing to whom to pay the money, they sent the cheque to me, and I in turn now pay the money over to you."

She was grateful beyond words, for she would have died rather than tell Denis Connor of the straitened circumstances she was in, though she was obliged to confess to him that she had not been living with her husband for long months—a revelation which surprised Denis immensely. But he made no comment.

Mrs. Howard was surprised at Pauline's announcement of her sudden departure. She had told Denis she needed little preparation, simply to take a portmanteau, and then in a hesitating voice she had revealed to Denis why she had no wardrobe—it was on account of the fire, and that she was the woman he had rescued.

"Why did you not tell me of it at the time?" he asked.

A whiteness overspread her face. She did not answer him.

His carriage was at the door, and when he left Mrs. Howard's cottage, Pauline accompanied him to the home of the friends who were going out West, after bidding adieu to Mrs. Howard and promising to write to her.

To Pauline it looked as though she had left the earth and been lifted to heaven to find herself once more beside Denis, the only man she had ever cared for. But why was he so cold and formal, treating her as though she were a stranger?

He did not even attempt to keep up the conversation. Had he forgotten her so utterly? Perhaps he had found some other love. This thought filled her with alarm. She felt that she must know.

"Denis," she said, suddenly and wistfully, "why do you treat me as though I were a stranger to you?"

The question was so sudden that it took him aback for a moment; but he quickly recovered himself.

"Must I answer that question?" he asked.

"Yes," said Pauline.

"Because I am only human," he retorted, after a moment's pause. "Your presence recalls too many memories to make it safe for me to linger on it."

Before she could reply the carriage came to a sudden stop.

"We have reached our destination," he said, springing quickly from the brougham, and holding out his hand for her to alight.

An old gentleman stood in the door-way, who greeted Denis warmly, looking with eagerness at his companion.

"Have you found your sister?" he asked.

"No," said Denis; "this is a young lady friend of mine, who has had the misfortune of just having lost her husband. She has decided to return to her home in America, and knowing

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that you are about to start for there, I ventured to place her in your protection."

"And I shall be only too glad to accept the charge," said the old gentleman, heartily. "But, my dear boy, there has been a different schedule put into operation since I saw you last. The boat sails at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, instead of at noon. Our trunks have already gone. We are waiting for the cab now which is to take us to the station. When your carriage stopped, I was sure that it was the one for us."

"An hour or so does not matter much," said Denis. "I will accompany you as far as the station, and see you all off," he added.

"But where is the young lady's baggage?"

"I will attend to that," answered Denis, replying to the embarrassing question quickly, as it would need so much explanation from Pauline. "I ought to stop at the hotel and see if there's any correspondence for me," he said, little dreaming of the important letter which awaited him from Bertie Howard; "but I haven't time it appears," he said, consulting his watch. "As it is, it will be a close shave to catch the train."

This proved to be the case. The express was just steaming out of the station as they reached it. It was with the greatest haste that Denis secured their tickets.

"Shall I see you again soon?" said Pauline, looking eagerly into Denis's face.

"Would you care to?" he breathed, hoarsely.

"Yes," she answered, and the answer seemed breathed from the very depths of her heart, and abode in the light of her wistful eyes.

"Then I will come in a few weeks' time."

"Good-bye," she said. Her lips trembled, and her eyes filled with tears as she clung to him, weeping and sobbing as if her heart would break. When would she see him again? It might not be for years—it might be—never!

The clanging of the bell reminded them that Time's relentless hand was thrusting them apart. Denis stood on the platform watching the beautiful face pressed closely against the pane, until it was out of sight; then he turned away.

How strange were the workings of Fate! Through the accident Maurice Fairfax had

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been removed from his path, and Pauline had been restored to him. Had it not been for the loss of Norah his heart would have been lighter than it had been for many a day—ay, his cup of earthly bliss would have been full to overflowing.

Pauline sank back in her seat. It seemed to her that she was beginning to live again, despite the load of sorrow that had almost crushed her soul.

She had watched her lover out of sight. She gave a great start of anxiety as she remembered this. It was not considered lucky to watch one out of sight. Her aunt, Mrs. Peters, had told her that when she was a little child. She remembered that she had watched her father out of sight on the memorable day he had left Castle R. yal, she had never seen him since.

She hoped with all her heart that nothing would keep her from Denis. Ah, how strong and manly, and noble he was! She felt sorry for the fate of Maurice Fairfax; but she the man had been so cruel to her. She remembered how he had raised his hand and struck her. She remembered the humiliation he had caused her, and the shameless people with whom he had brought her into contact.

The holocaust had been terrible—first the wreck of the train, then its catching fire, and the burning to cinders of the mutilated bodies was so dreadful that the charred remains of the passengers was not recognisable one from the other. For this reason Denis Connor had advised her not to remain for the funeral. The shock would be so great that she would never get over it. Ah, how careful he was of her! How she thanked Heaven that he loved her still, even as she loved him!

CHAPTER LI.

DENIS re-entered the cab his heart and mind in a whirl. It seemed to him scarcely a moment ere the carriage drew up in front of the hotel. He had an appointment to see a gentleman in town. Upon looking at his watch, he found that he had barely time to get there; but he told himself he must run in and get his letter.

It was then that he found Bertie Howard's letter awaiting him. His emotions, as he read it, can better be imagined than described.

In a flash he had entered the vehicle again, excitedly commanding the driver to drive with all haste to the number indicated.

Little Norah married to the writer of the letter!

Good Heavens! he could not, he would not believe it! Some scoundrel had read of the money which her brother had inherited, and thought to obtain a good slice of it by abducting the girl and forcing her into a marriage and being bought off at a good price.

His feet scarcely touched the ground as he sprang from the vehicle, and he could hardly await the appearance of the man whose letter he held in his hand. But when five, ten minutes passed, and he did not put in an appearance, Denis grew almost distracted.

If he had not been informed by the maid that Mr. Howard would see him if he would come upstairs, he would have gone through the house himself in search of Norah.

Denis shook like an aspen leaf as he ascended the stairs, grasping at the railing to keep himself from falling; his heart beat so loudly that it seemed it must burst.

"This way, sir," said the maid, throwing open the door. "You will find the gentleman and the sick lady in here."

He stepped across the threshold. For an instant a mist swam before his eyes, and as it cleared away he saw a couch near one of the lace draped windows. Upon it a figure lay, which he recognized but too well, and beside it the tall figure of a young man whose face was turned toward him.

Denis advanced, his face pale as it would ever be in death, until he stood within a few feet of the man whose letter he still held in his hand.

He was so overcome with emotion that he dared not trust himself to speak, nor dared he give way to his feelings as he gazed on the face of Norah, lying white and motionless on the pillow. Bertie was the first to recover himself. He knew intuitively what his feelings were.

He felt he must be the first to make overtures. He advanced and eagerly held out his hand, but Denis took no notice of this action.

"I have your letter," he said; "let me understand it thoroughly before I decide what course of action to pursue."

"Will you please sit down," said Bertie, huskily, pointing to a seat; but Norah's brother ignored the chair as he had the hand of the man who had proffered it. He did not even attempt to give the sister he loved so dearly one glance.

Standing before Norah's brother with folded arms, Bertie commenced at the beginning. He did not spare himself, but told the truth from beginning to end.

Great as Denis's amazement was when he heard him speak of Maurice Fairfax, and his belief that he was doing a kindly action in helping to trace his fugitive bride, he made no outer sign, and Bertie continued his narrative—of Captain Burton's admiration for the young girl whom he had by mistake abducted, and how he had saved her from the captain's clutches at almost the cost of his life, not knowing who she was; of his flight, the breaking down of the cab, and how he had been forced to take shelter, wounded as he was, in an old man's cabin to escape the storm; of the long night passed waiting for the return of the old man who had gone to fetch a doctor, and how he had proposed to the girl to marry her, and she had decided to accept him.

"Your absence prevented my wife or self from notifying you before," cried Bertie, brokenly.

He told of his love for Norah, threw himself upon the brother's mercy, and asked him not to take her from him.

"I have you to thank for your manliness in that affair with Captain Burton, which I shall hold him accountable for in the near future. But as for leaving my sister with you, that I cannot do. It would be like taking advantage of her youth and inexperience in mating her with a man of whom I know nothing. Your story may have worked upon the sympathy of this poor child, who knew nothing of love or lovers. The marriage must be annulled."

All in vain Bertie pleaded. Norah's brother was inexorable.

"It is the only course left open to me," he said, sternly. "If I should not raise a protest, perhaps the time would come when Norah would cry out against me that I had not saved her from a fate which was horrible to her. She does not love you. I do not like to doubt your assertion, but it seems to me impossible that you love her, knowing her so short a time."

(To be continued.)

EPPS'S

EXTRACT FROM A LECTURE ON "FOODS AND THEIR VALUES," BY DR. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., etc.—
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FACETIE.

"It seems strange," said Barnstormer, to a friend, "that when an egg isn't good for anything else it goes on the stage."

"Are you in pain, my little man?" asked the kind old gentleman. "No," answered the boy. "The pain's in me."

STRAWHER: "Why do you think you will have any trouble in keeping the engagement secret?" Singery: "I had to tell the girl, didn't I?"

EXCITED WIFE: "Oh, professor, the cook has fallen and broken her collar-bone." Professor: "Discharge her at once. You told her what to expect if she broke anything more."

SHE: "How would you punctuate the following: 'Bank of England notes of various values were blown along the street by the wind!'" He: "I think I would make a dash after the notes."

HAWKINS: "I see your folks are back from their holidays. How are they?" Banks: "Oh, they stood it first-rate. As far as I can see, they're nearly as well as they were before they started."

"What did you think of my speech, Mrs. Tactly?" asked the sapient young statesman. "I thought some of your quotations perfectly grand."

FRIENDLEIGH: "I'm thinking of dabbling a little in stocks. What's a good thing to put your money in?" Broker: "Your inside pocket."

DOCTOR: "Your uncle died of a complication of diseases, did he not?" Jack: "Either that or a complication of doctors, I am not sure which."

"Let me see—last Saturday was Miss May Tower's birthday, was it not? How did the day pass off?" "It passed off quietly. It was her fortieth."

MR. HOPEFUL: "How dull it was at Wilkins' party last night." She: "Yes; in the early part of the evening. It got brighter soon after you left."

WILLIE: "Ma, can people leave parts of themselves in different places?" "No; don't be ridiculous." "Well, Mr. Jiggs said he was going to Arizona for his lungs."

MRS. SWELLINGTON: "Are you sure this is the fashion?" Modiste: "Ouf, madame! Z' ver' latest?" Mrs. Swellington (still doubtful): "Queer! It looks well and feels comfortable."

"Well," said the smiling and leisurely caller to the busy editor, "I haven't bothered you for quite a while." "That is true," replied the editor; "there have been plenty of other borer."

MRS. CARRY: "Doctor, Oi want yez for to look at little Patsy's croak. It be so sore from schmokin'." Doctor: "Does he smoke incessantly?" Mrs. Carry: "He do not. Sure, he schmokes cigarootes."

MRS. HENRY PECK: (whose mother has been visiting them for over four months): "I don't know what to buy mother for a present. Do you?" Mr. Henry Peck: "Yes! Buy her a travelling bag."

"That Miss Goldrick seems to be awfully popular with the young men." "Popular is no name for it. Why, do you know her father has actually got out a printed form of declaration of affare for her hand!"

HE: "The astrologer described you exactly, and said that I would marry you." She: "Don't you think it was a waste of money to consult him?" "Why?" "I could have told you the same thing myself."

SHE (who has seen the play before): "His great scene is in the next act. He feels remorse for having killed the old man." He: "Doesn't he feel remorse for not having killed the rest of the cast?"

ELDERLY LADY (been out shopping, laden with purchases, and out of breath): "But you 'ave room for one inside." Conductor: "One inside's all very well, miss, but we ain't a pan-tickenein furniture removal van!"

"I DON'T know what I would have done if it hadn't been for you!" exclaimed the discharged prisoner. "Well, you would probably have done time," said the proud lawyer.

MRS. MANN (meeting her former servant): "Ah, Mary, I suppose you are getting better wages at your new place?" Mary: "No, ma'am. I'm working for nothing now; I'm married."

LUSHINGTON (who has fallen asleep against a lamp-post, and has buttoned his overcoat round it): "Let me go, I tell you! If you're a lady, thish conduct lah wrong; and if you're a thief I haven't a halfpenny, so let me go."

WILLIE: "I had a little brother go to heaven last night." Bobbie: "Oh, that's nothing. I had a little brother come from heaven last night." Willie (after thinking a moment): "Maybe it's the same baby!"

"We have parted for ever," said the young man, sadly. "She is never even going to write to me again." "Are you sure of that?" asked his sympathetic friend. "Yes. She told me so in each of her last three letters."

MRS. SHORT: "Now, look here, George, I thought you said you had been duck-shooting!" Mr. Short: "Yes, m' dear, been duck—(hic)—shooting." "But these ducks you brought home are tame ducks." "Y-e-s, m' dear; I tamed 'em after I—(hic)—shot 'em."

RACHEL: "Then you give your consent, papa!" Isaac: "Yes, my daughter; but I cannot let you lead me. You are main only child, and you and Benjamin must live here mit de old folks. You can haf that second-story front room for thirty shillings a-week."

EDITOR: "Mr. Paragraph, I wish you wouldn't write so many jokes about men who can't pay their bills; they are funny enough in a way, but so many of them are a little monotonous. Can't you get your mind on some other subject?" Mr. Paragraph (thoughtfully): "Perhaps I could, if I had a larger salary."

FIRST HOUSEHOLDER: "It's a wonder those explorers don't become discouraged and give up the North Pole." Second Householder: "Nonsense! Haven't you and I been searching fifteen years for a satisfactory cook, and isn't the search going on as vigorously as ever?"

A COUNTRY lad, who had got into trouble and had a summons served upon him, was taken by his mother to a well-known Nottingham solicitor—whom we will call Mr. Deeds—to arrange about his defence. The good woman at once began to tell the lawyer the woful tale; but suddenly remembering that perhaps her son could give a better account of his backsliding himself, she addressed him in the following words: "Now, Jarge, just you tell the whole truth. Mr. Deeds' paid to tell the lie." The woman afterwards found that the lawyer's bill was unusually high.

"PAPA, what would you do if some bad man with a great big revolver was to jump up in front of you some dark night when you didn't have anything to shoot with, and should point his revolver at you and should say: 'Your money or your life!'" "I should do just as I do when mamma says: 'James dear, I have to go down town this morning and buy a few things for the house. Let me have £5, please.' I should hand the money over. Don't get the idea that I am foolhardy, child."

A MOTHER, in a certain station in India, being troubled at the pain suffered by her child teething, wrote to the doctor, an Army medical surgeon, as follows: "Dear Dr. Smith, Baby's gums are paining him dreadfully; would you kindly come and see him, and bring your lancet!" The doctor, who was pompous, and whose official rank was surgeon-major, sent back the letter with the message that there was no such person as Dr. Smith in the station. The mother was equal to the occasion, and wrote a second letter. "Dear Surgeon-Major Smith, As my baby is suffering great pain in teething, I would feel greatly obliged if you would attend him, and bring your sword."



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SOCIETY.

PRINCE and Princess Charles of Denmark will make Appleton House their headquarters until the beginning of February, when they are to return to Copenhagen for four months.

THE cradle presented by the Queen to the Duke of York's baby was made for the Princess Royal in 1840, and all the Queen's babies slept in it. The sheets are of fine Irish linen, edged with Valenciennes lace, and the blankets are of the warmest and lightest Spanish wool.

THE Queen is to leave Windsor Castle for Osborne about Friday, December 17th, and her Majesty will reside in the Isle of Wight for between nine and ten weeks. When the Queen leaves Osborne in February she intends to make a short stay at Windsor before proceeding to the Riviera. Her Majesty will remain abroad for quite six weeks.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales are to arrive at Welbeck Abbey on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Portland on the evening of Tuesday, December 14th, accompanied by Princess Victoria and Prince and Princess Charles of Denmark. The Royal party will travel by special train from King's Cross to Worksop. There will be three days' shooting over the Welbeck, Cuckney, and Clapstone preserves, and the party is to break up on Saturday. The intended county ball at Welbeck will not take place, in consequence of the death of the Duchess of Teck.

LIVADIA was the favourite residence of the Emperor Alexander II., and is one of the most beautiful resorts in Russia. There are two Imperial palaces, both of fairy-like beauty, and there are also a number of other palaces and villas belonging to the Russian nobility. Livadia is celebrated for the excellence of its wine and climate. The Tsar and Tsarina will return to St. Petersburg for Christmas, which they will spend at the Winter Palace.

WHEN any of her grandchildren are about to be married the Queen always likes, if it is at all practicable, to have them on a visit some time before that important event in their lives. She is naturally greatly interested in the betrothal of Princess Feodora of Saxe-Meiningen, and is particularly anxious to have her with her before her marriage in the spring. Princess Feodora will accordingly come to England early in the new year with her mother and father, and her grandmother, the Empress Frederick. They will stay for some weeks with the Queen at Osborne and at Windsor, and it is probable that the bridegroom-elect may also come over on a brief visit, in order to be presented to his bride's august relative.

It is stated at the Stuttgart Court that the Duchess of Olga of Württemberg has been betrothed to Prince Eugène of Sweden and Norway. The Duchess is the twin daughter of the Grand Duchess Vera Constantinovna of Russia, and was born March 1st, 1876, with her twin sister, the Duchess Elsa, who a few months back espoused Prince Albert of Schaumburg-Lippe, brother of the Queen of Württemberg, and brother-in-law of Princess Louise of Denmark (Princess Frederick of Schaumburg-Lippe), eldest niece of the Princess of Wales. The Duchess's father was the late Duke Eugene of Württemberg, who died in 1877, a cousin of the Duke of Teck, and her aunt is the Queen of the Hellenes. Like her sister, the Duchess Olga is considered one of the finest parties in Europe, each having a *dé* of half a million sterling left them by their great-aunt, Queen Olga of Württemberg, after whom the Duchess is named.

THE Riviera in the coming season promises to be more crowded than ever with Royal personages, for, in addition to the Queen, the Princesses Henry of Battenberg, and the Prince and Princess of Wales—the latter of whom will visit her sister, the Dowager Empress of Russia, at La Turbie, the Empress Eugénie will be at her villa, Cyrena, at St. Martin, where the Emperor and Empress of Austria will also arrive at the hotel.

STATISTICS.

THE average depth of all the oceans is from 2,000 to 3,000 fathoms.

A TON of soot results from the burning of 100 tons of coal.

It is said that the aliens in New York actually outnumber the Americans.

AN oculist declares that only one pair of eyes in every fifteen are absolutely perfect.

A STATISTICIAN asserts that every square mile of the sea is inhabited by 120,000,000 funny creatures.

WHEN a woman's height is 5ft. 5in. her waist should be 24in., her ankle 7 to 7½in., and her wrist should measure 5½in. round.

To show the carelessness of mothers in Great Britain, over 3,000 children are burnt to death in the year from their clothes catching fire.

GEMS.

By two things a man is lifted up from things earthly, namely, by simplicity and purity.

WHEN we read, we fancy we could be martyrs; when we come to act, we cannot bear one provoking word.

EVERYWHERE and always a man's worth must be gauged to some extent, though only in part, by his domesticity.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

OYSTER RISOLLES.—Drain the liquor from a quart of oysters. Chop very fine. Add four well beaten eggs and enough cracker meal to make the mixture thick enough to form into little balls. Season to taste and fry in boiling lard. Arrange on a napkin, garnishing with parsley and slices of lemon.

CHERRY-SAVOIR.—Peel, boil and chop about fifty chestnuts very fine, put them in a saucepan and toast them for a moment over a brisk fire. In a heaping teaspoonful of butter, sprinkle with a saltspoonful of salt, three dashes of pepper, a pinch of chervil and tarragon, chopped as fine as possible. Have ready some crisp buttered toast, spread the mixture over and serve.

SPICED BEEF.—Place one and a half pounds of beef on the fire in a kettle, with just enough water to cover, and boil slowly until it is so tender that it may be readily torn to pieces. By this time the water should be reduced in quantity one-half, but if it is not skim out the meat and boil down the liquor to the proper amount. Then return the beef to the kettle, and with a knife and fork tear it into shreds, mixing it with the liquor. Add one and one-fourth teaspoonful of salt and one-fourth teaspoonful each of ground pepper, cloves, cinnamon and allspice. Mix well, and turn the whole into a mould. When cold turn from the mould and slice neatly for serving.

LOBSTER CUTLETS.—Boil a good-sized lobster, and when cold remove the flesh, and with a silver knife cut it into small pieces; measure, and to each pint of this meat allow a half pint of milk, one tablespoonful of butter, two rounding tablespoonfuls of flour, a tablespoonful of chopped parsley, half a teaspoonful of onion juice, a teaspoonful of salt, quarter of a teaspoonful of pepper and a grating of nutmeg. Put the milk over the fire; rub the butter and flour together, add to it the hot milk; stir until smooth and thick. Mix paste and meat together, add yolks of two eggs, put over the fire for just a moment, and turn out to cool. When cold form into outlet-shaped croquettes; dip into beaten egg, then in bread crumbs, and fry in smoking hot fat.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Chinese language has 40,000 simple words and only 450 roots.

SNAKE'S liver is said to taste very like good ptarmigan.

FIVE HUNDRED years ago the rent of arable land in England was sixpence an acre.

WATER is said to be the only liquid that can be drunk in Alaska without injurious effects.

WITHIN a few years 200 artesian wells have been opened in Queensland, yielding 125,000,000 gallons of water a day.

In Norway, ice-breaking machines are in use which paddle their way through ice twenty-eight inches thick at the rate of four miles an hour.

THERE are more houses in London than in Paris, New York, and Vienna put together. This is to be accounted for by the fact that the inhabitants of those towns reside mostly in flats.

It is estimated that the profits of Italian ice-cream vendors who sell their wares at street corners of the metropolis are at the rate of 700 per cent. Several of them are owners of large estates in their native country.

FLOATING beds of seaweed, which are often met with in mid-ocean, have been observed to reduce the height of waves, like oil thrown upon the water. Taking advantage of this fact, a scientist has invented a thin cotton or elken net to answer the same purpose.

STATE subsidies have not encouraged ship-building in France apparently, as most French owners prefer to have their ships built in England, the reason being that they cost 40 per cent. more in France, and are three times as long under construction. In Germany, on the contrary, State aid has stimulated shipbuilding greatly.

ACCORDING to the computation of the gardener at St. Paul's Cathedral, the number of pigeons which add such a charm to the sacred edifice exceeds 600. Originally bred from "strays," they are daily being added to by new arrivals; whilst amongst the number may be counted some twenty-five to thirty one-legged birds—the survivors of various "shooting matches."

THERE is a remarkable shawl in the possession of the Duchess of Northumberland. This was formerly the property of Charles X. of France; it was manufactured entirely from the fur of Persian cats. Several thousands of catskins were utilised in weaving it, and the task occupied some years. The shawl measures eight yards square.

THE telephone, it is said, is not making much progress in Russia. And no wonder! Fancy a man going to a "phone and shouting—"Hallo, is that you. Driastikivchmarivolsakio?" "No, it is Zollemchoukaffimrockniffagrowff who's speaking!" "Saximochokiertjuak-smakischokemoff, I want to know if Xifferoman-skeffikillmajuchavastowakaweldieraki is still stopping with Driastikivchmarivolsakio!"

ARABIAN horses manifest remarkable courage in battle. It is said that when a horse of this breed finds himself wounded and perceives that he will not be able to bear his rider much longer he quickly retires from the conflict, bearing his master to a place of safety, while he has still sufficient strength. But if, on the other hand, the rider is wounded and falls to the ground, the faithful animal remains beside him, unmindful of danger, neighing until assistance is brought.

THE lightest known solid is said to be the pith of the sunflower, with a specific gravity of .028, or about one-eighth that of cork. The sunflower is extensively cultivated in central Russia, and various uses are served by its different parts, the recent discovery of the lightness of the pith essentially increasing the commercial value of the plant. For life-saving appliances at sea, cork has a buoyancy of one to five, while with the sunflower pith one to thirty-five is attained. About eight hundred cubic inches of it would weigh as much as one cubic inch of iridium, the heaviest metal.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

EVERGREEN.—Evergreen privet certainly makes the better garden hedge.

NERVOUS.—The parties cannot injure you, and the letter is a mere empty threat.

ROCKING.—If the room is full it is best to accompany him and take the seats placed for you.

MATHEMATICS.—From £50 to £100 would be the very smallest you could venture with into such a business.

PAULINE.—The "best way to take mildew stains out of brocade velvet" is to send the material to the dyer to be redipped.

TEA-GROWER.—Oid tea and coffee stains, which have become "set," should be soaked in cold water first, then boiling.

NOVICE.—Fresh fish should not be soaked in water before cooking. This treatment only ruins the flavour and makes it soft.

T. D. - St. Petersburg is the coldest capital in Europe, the temperature in winter sometimes reaching fifty degrees below zero.

AMATEUR NIGER TRADERS.—Yes; if the copyright has not expired. No doubt permission would be granted if it were asked for.

BRIAN.—Take two parts emery powder of finest quality, one part spermaceti ointment, mix together and rub over the nose strip.

LEILAH.—Flour paste is spoiled if allowed to boil for any time. It should just be brought to boiling point and then withdrawn from the fire.

C. M. G.—Whether or not the ailment that is called by this name is a series of nervous convulsions brought on by fright or excitement is a debatable question.

TOD.—A seaport is a city or town situated in a harbour or an arm of the sea possessing docks and other facilities for ships to take in or discharge cargo.

BLUE SKIN.—White is not a colour; speaking scientifically it is a blending of all colours, so that none shows above another, with the result that none is shown at all.

EDITOR.—Think seriously over what you wish to say, then take advantage of or make an opportunity to say it simply, honestly, frankly, and in as few words as possible.

BROKEN-HEARTED LIL.—Forget him. You may be quite sure that anyone who would trifles with a girl's feelings as he has done with yours is no true man, and not worthy of any woman's love.

N. V.—There are several kinds of sympathetic inks. Write with a solution of nitrate of silver, and when dry it will be invisible, if dipped in a solution containing ammonia, the letter will appear in black.

KOP-ROCK.—The diamond Koh-i-Noor, or Mountain of Light, in the possession of Her Majesty, was found in the celebrated mines of Golconda. It has belonged in turn to several Eastern potentates before it was brought to England in 1850. Its value is figuratively computed at two millions sterling.

R. T.—Twelve years is the longest period a man can enlist for in the British Army; but after serving that time, and if his character is good, he can be enlisted for another nine years.

FARMER.—Farming is an exceedingly interesting pursuit and the enthusiast who conducts his business intelligently is likely to get not only health and strength but a fair reward for his labour.

ANTONY.—Torpedo-boat destroyers are torpedo carriers—that is to say, they catch the boats which discharge torpedoes; they are larger, heavier, more powerfully armed, and faster than the torpedo boats.

MISTAKEN JANE.—Write him to the effect that, as the prospects of a marriage with him appear to be still indefinite, you think it wiser and better for both to terminate the engagement at once.

MOUNTAIN SECRETS.

In the multitudes of Nature,
Sweetest lessons all divine
Lie in craggy rock and fern-cliff,
Nestle in the birch and pine.

Softest turf and from hillside,
Rippling brook and torrent grand,
Oavern deep and snow-dusted mountain,
Hides a story love has planned.

And the bluebells dare not whisper,
Nor can tallest pine proclaim
Half the secrets of their knowing;
Nor can thunder cloud nor rain.

Tell the mystery of king,
Of the forest's birth sublime,
Or the star-song of the ether,
Or the cry of bird or kine.

Yet within the woodland echo,
In the voices on the hill,
Dwells the song which lives forever,
Of Love's sacred, "Peace, be still!"

SORELY PERPLEXED.—Yes, there is nothing to prevent your being married in a registry office and afterwards in a church if you wish it. There are no registry offices in America as we understand them.

A. B. C.—It is a common error to suppose that birds sleep with the head beneath the wing. No bird ever sleeps so; the head is turned round and laid upon the back, where it is often concealed by feathers.

APPLICANT.—Your best plan would be to make personal application; next best write to superintendent and state just what you are seeking, and your experience and ability to fill such a position if there is a vacancy.

ROUGH SKIN.—Melt together one drachm of white wax, one of spermaceti, with two ounces of olive oil; add two ounces of rose water and half ounce of orange flower water; rub together till they are thoroughly incorporated and the mixture is of the consistency of cream.

A. S. H.—The plan is to make a mixture of one part common nitric acid and half part sulphuric acid in a common stone jar, having also ready a pail of clean water and a box of sawdust; dip the articles in the acid, change into the water, then rub with sawdust; this changes them to a brilliant colour; if the brass has become very greasy it is first dipped in a strong solution of potash and soda.

ENTERTAINER.—Beat up the white of an egg, slightly add it to half a pint of good thick cream, sweeten with sifted sugar, continue to beat until it stands. While beating have ready the inside of half a fresh lemon which has been pressed through a sieve, and beat this in by degrees with the cream. Serve this puld high on a glass or silver dish, garnish with glass cherries, or red-currant jelly cut in small bits.

DAINTY.—Cut down stale lady fingers into small pieces. Pound four ounces of macaroons and rub with the lady fingers through a coarse sieve. Put a quart of rich milk on to boil, beat the eggs into a teaspoon of sugar, and stir into the boiling milk, take from the fire, and stand aside to cool. Garnish the bottom of a fancy pudding mould with candied cherries or strawberries; put over a layer of thinly-sliced stale sponge cake, then a sprinkling of the macaroons, then another layer of the fruit and sponge cake. Pour the custard over, cover the mould securely, pack in salt and ice, and freeze for three hours. When ready to serve turn the pudding out on a cold dish, and garnish with candied fruit.

COUNTRY MAID.—Beat the whites of three eggs to a stiff froth, then in another dish beat the yolks and add a tablespoonful of melted butter, a tablespoonful of salt, and a tablespoonful of sugar. (The reason for adding sugar is that griddle cakes brown more quickly and attractively when they contain sugar.) Then add one pint of sweet milk and one cupful of flour in which one teaspoonful of baking powder has been sifted. Lastly, stir in the whites: turn on to a hot, greased griddle enough of the batter to make a thin cake seven or eight inches across, and turn the cake as soon as brown. When done place on a hot platter; butter nicely; sprinkle lightly with sugar, spread over with a layer of any kind of jelly, preserves or marmalade, and roll up as if it were a jelly cake. Keep the finished cakes in a hot oven, with the door open until all are done.

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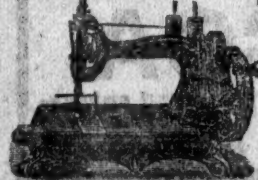
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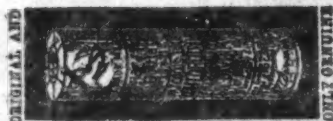
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